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Saturday February 17 1996

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR
46,478

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

Interview Joan Armatrada my private world Outlook page 17	Boxing Frankie Knating vs Ben Outlook page 18	Profile David Hare in retreat Outlook page 18
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Tugs fight to stop slick from tanker polluting wildlife reserves Disaster alert after oil spill



The stricken Liberian-registered oil tanker Sea Empress, shadowed by tugs, off St Ann's Head at the entrance to Milford Haven. It is the second vessel to founder on the rocks in four months. PHOTOGRAPH: NEW EVANS

TEAM of four ocean-going tugs was last night battling to keep the stricken Liberian-registered tanker Sea Empress afloat as oil slicks broken up by high winds

threatened wildlife reserves on the coast of west Wales. At least 200 tonnes of light crude oil came ashore on local beaches in and around the Milford Haven estuary, but booms, placed around the vessel, prevented further spillage. Seven marine pollution control planes sprayed de-

tergent oil to a five-mile slick, which was drifting eastwards. Two teams of Dutch-based Alsea assessed the vessel's damaged pump rooms and several cargo tanks holed in the accident. Plans were under way for a smaller 30,000-tonne tanker, Star Borgen, to be brought alongside to trans-

fer some of the remaining cargo before the Sea Empress was moved into harbour. The grounding of the ship beneath St Ann's Head, the second accident in almost exactly the same spot in the last four months, immediately prompted calls for an inquiry into shipping safety standards.

The vessel has no protective outer hull and was steamed by a Russian crew working under a foreign flag of convenience. The incident began at 8pm on Thursday when the 147,000-tonne Sea Empress, managed by Glasgow company Acomariff (UK) Ltd and carrying a local pilot, approached the entrance to

Milford Haven in order to discharge its cargo of North Sea oil at the Texaco refinery. The reasons for the accident, in which 6,000 tonnes of oil spilled into the sea, were not clear last night. The engines and steering gear were reported to have been working until it ran aground.

The immediate effect of the spill appeared to be localised. Along one stretch of Freshwater beach the Turn to page 3, column 3



Editor wins top award

Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger was named yesterday as editor of the year in the What The Papers Say awards.

The panel of judges from Granada Television and the BBC said he "came to his job just over a year ago bringing with him the advantages of youth... Alan Rusbridger was responsible as deputy for launching the Guardian's tabloid section. He has brought the same creativity to the broadsheet section, making it a clear and enjoyable read, highlighting each day's strengths in style.

"It is unusual for so many changes in design, personnel and emphasis to be achieved so soon and so smoothly — and without joining the price war."

The Daily Mail was newspaper of the year and Stuart Higgins, editor of the Sun, won the scoop of the year award for the story that the Queen had urged the Prince and Princess of Wales to begin divorce proceedings. Details, page 4

£1m reward offer and 30 raids in bomb hunt

REWARD of £1 million was offered yesterday in an attempt to catch the IRA Docklands bombers as more than 30 raids were carried out throughout the country. At dawn yesterday, officers from a number of police forces raided more than 30 addresses across the country, including London, Kent, Essex, and the West Midlands. A number of people were arrested. Some were later released. The arrests were not made under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Commander John Grievs, head of the Anti-Terrorist Branch, said the sweeps were the result of a proactive operation based on intelligence from the security services and Special Branch. He added that the reward had been put up by members of the community whose identity he would not reveal "for obvious reasons". He said: "We will use every weapon we are given by our communities to bring terrorists to justice. Communities, when confronted by this kind of crime, can and do offer



extra resources. We know that some criminals are motivated by money and we can all use that to get the information we need." Commander Grievs said that the anti-terrorist telephone hotline had given police "some excellent leads" including further details of the huge Road flat-back lorry used to plant the bomb.

The lorry had travelled from Stranraer to Carlisle on Wednesday night of last week and was next seen at Ram on Friday morning at South Motors service station on the M25. It was then driven to waste land at River Road, Barking, where it was probably stored, before leaving for South Quay at about 4pm. The Docklands bomb exploded at 7.01pm. Commander Grievs appealed for more information about the lorry, especially where it was on Thursday and where it was between South Quay, Minsmere and Barking. It was revealed that the trailer that had travelled on the lorry had the index number 515/7H, which also refers to a Road cargo truck that had been cut up. In 1993, a reward fund of £1 million was set up by major businesses in the wake of two City bombs. No one has yet been arrested for either of those bombs. A question-mark now hangs over the future of IRA prisoners serving sentences in mainland jails. A number had been transferred back to Ireland but the assumption of the bombing may affect the movement of others.

Pressure mounts for Lyell and Waldegrave to resign

PRESSURE on William Waldegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney General, to resign in the wake of the Scott report into the arms-to-Iraq scandal mounted yesterday as Labour and Liberal Democrats signalled their determination to force the issue in the run-up to the Commons vote in 10 days time. The Prime Minister was insisting Sir Richard Scott's three year investigation had "comprehensively dismissed" the most serious allegations against senior ministers. A small group of Tory MPs were last night privately expressing unease at the ferocity of the report's criticism, including the finding that Sir Nicholas Lyell was culpable. One Tory back-bencher, Rupert Allason, said the criticisms of Sir Nicholas were "unfair". Sir Teddy Taylor called on the government to take them more seriously. The report will be put to a Commons vote on Monday week, but the opposition be-

lieves that even if no ministers resign, it will still benefit, pointing out that a teletext poll yesterday showed overwhelming support for resignations. In a joint press conference, the shadow foreign secretary, Robin Cook, and the Liberal Democrat defence spokesman, Menzies Campbell, urged Tory MPs to recognise Mr Waldegrave had been found guilty of deliberately misleading Parliament more than 30 times. Mr Campbell said: "It is not possible to think of any sphere of activity in which an individual could be so criticised and still retain his job." Mr Cook argued the cumulative criticism of Sir Nicholas Lyell was "the most damaging and most authoritative criticisms ever made of a law officer". It emerged last night that the Government applied severe pressure on Sir Richard Scott to tone down his criticisms. The job of leading the inquiry was assigned to the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robin Butler. His increasingly sharp exchanges with the Scott team are reflected in a little-noticed letter from Sir Richard to Ian

Lang, Trade and Industry Secretary, at the beginning of the 1,800-page report. Sir Richard noted that Christopher Munk-Falkenberg, the inquiry secretary, had the task of dealing with senior ministers and officials. In a coded message which the Government will have no difficulty in deciphering, he said those who know the man had come to understand that Mr Munk-Falkenberg "cannot be intimidated". Senior civil servants, meanwhile, challenged ministers to say who was to blame. "Our major concern remains that Government ministers do not seek to shift the blame inherent in Sir Richard's criticisms onto Civil Service shoulders," said Liz Symons, general secretary of the First Division Association. Mr Major promised some low key changes, including better dissemination of intelligence information, but Mr Lang rejected a Freedom of Information Act. He added: "FIS have been used for a long time and will continue to be used". Scott afterwards, page 5; Sir George Young, page 12; Leader comment, page 14

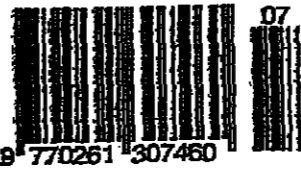
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Inside



Nato finds Bosnian 'terror camp'

Julian Borger in Sarajevo

NATO troops raided a clandestine training camp near Sarajevo where Iranian agents are suspected of teaching Bosnian secret policemen how to rig booby-traps and carry out assassinations. Nato officials said yesterday.

Three Iranian instructors were arrested at the camp. Their presence was a violation of the Dayton peace agreement on the eve of this weekend's crisis summit in Rome intended to repair cracks in the peace process after breaches on all sides.

Presidents Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia, Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia and Franjo Tudjman of Croatia will hold two days of talks with diplomats from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Italy, who are expected to press them to renew their commitment to the Dayton deal, signed in December.

Nato troops also captured eight Bosnians in Thursday night's raid. One of the Iranians was later released when he was found to have a diplomatic passport. The other two had Iranian military ID papers.

Admiral Leighton Smith, commander of the Nato-led

Implementation Force (I-For) which is policing the Bosnia peace settlement, said: "No one can escape the obvious - that this is a terrorist training camp and it has direct association with people in the government."

The incident is a serious embarrassment for Mr Izetbegovic. Under the Dayton pact, all foreign forces should have left Bosnia before the end of January. Adam Smith said Mr Izetbegovic, when confronted with the discovery, had replied that it was an old training facility which was being dismantled.

The training centre was in an isolated ski chalet just outside Pofonica. Nato officials showed journalists evidence that members of the Bosnian state security service were taught how to booby-trap toys and other household items. Journalists saw sham probes with explosives inside, and a number of bombs made from a sketch in a notebook found in the centre showed a child's foot in a pillow-stuffed bag on a booby trap. "The terrorists obviously didn't get any classes on the Geneva Convention, but they did show a new way to blow a child's sneaker foot off," an American officer said.

Nato officers said they found a great deal of documentation in Farsi, and an Air Iran return ticket from Tehran. They also displayed cardboard models of houses and buildings found in the camp. "The scary thing is these are not military-type objects. These are civilian-area objects," said an American officer examining the models.

"We go right down here to an individual house. See the little man standing out there... This is probably a mock-up for an assassination."

A thick dossier containing photographs and plans of a building was titled: "The special operations project to kidnap the Serb liaison officer at the Post Office engineering building in Sarajevo."

In a raid yesterday, French Nato soldiers surrounded two suspects and searched a building in the Sarajevo suburb of Ilidza.

Heavily armed troops stood by, and helicopters hovered overhead, as Serb police moved into the building and took the two men away for questioning. I-For's mandate does not allow its troops to make such arrests themselves.

Lucien writes a prayer

John Mullin

UCIEN Lawrence, who wrote to Santa Claus asking for his murdered father back, yesterday moved mourners to tears at the funeral of his father with a prayer he wrote himself.

Lucien, aged eight, stood on a box behind the lectern as he delivered his prayer in a clear voice. But he was still barely visible. Copies were handed out to 800 mourners at Baling Abbey in west London, complete with his spelling errors.

Mr Lawrence, aged 48, died of stab wounds he suffered in December outside St George's Roman Catholic school in Maids Vale, north-west London, when he intervened in a struggle between youths and one of his pupils.

Lucien, who led the entourage out of the church to a private burial ceremony, said: "God in Heaven, help us to think for a minute about the time when we all met my daddy."

"Help us to think of his headmaster. Not only was he a headmaster but he was my daddy too."

"I remember the time he hurt me something... even though it was expensive."

"The time he learnt me to spell words. How gentle he was."

"We played football in the hallway... even when he had lots of work to do."

"Loving God, help us to pray that we will meet my daddy again."

The prayer, which followed a memorial service at Westminster Cathedral three weeks ago, was delayed because of the police investigation. Two youths are to appear in court in connection with Mr Lawrence's death.



Frances Lawrence follows the coffin of her husband with her three daughters

PHOTOGRAPH JOHN STILLWELL

Hospital sends home dying patients

Chris Mihill

A HOSPITAL which is sending home dying cancer patients with painkillers but no other form of treatment because of a cash crisis said yesterday it was seeking more money - but other services

might suffer if the extra funding was found.

A hospital spokesman explained there had been a continuing rise in cancer patients needing treatment, so that over the past year 10 per cent more patients had been seen than had been budgeted for.

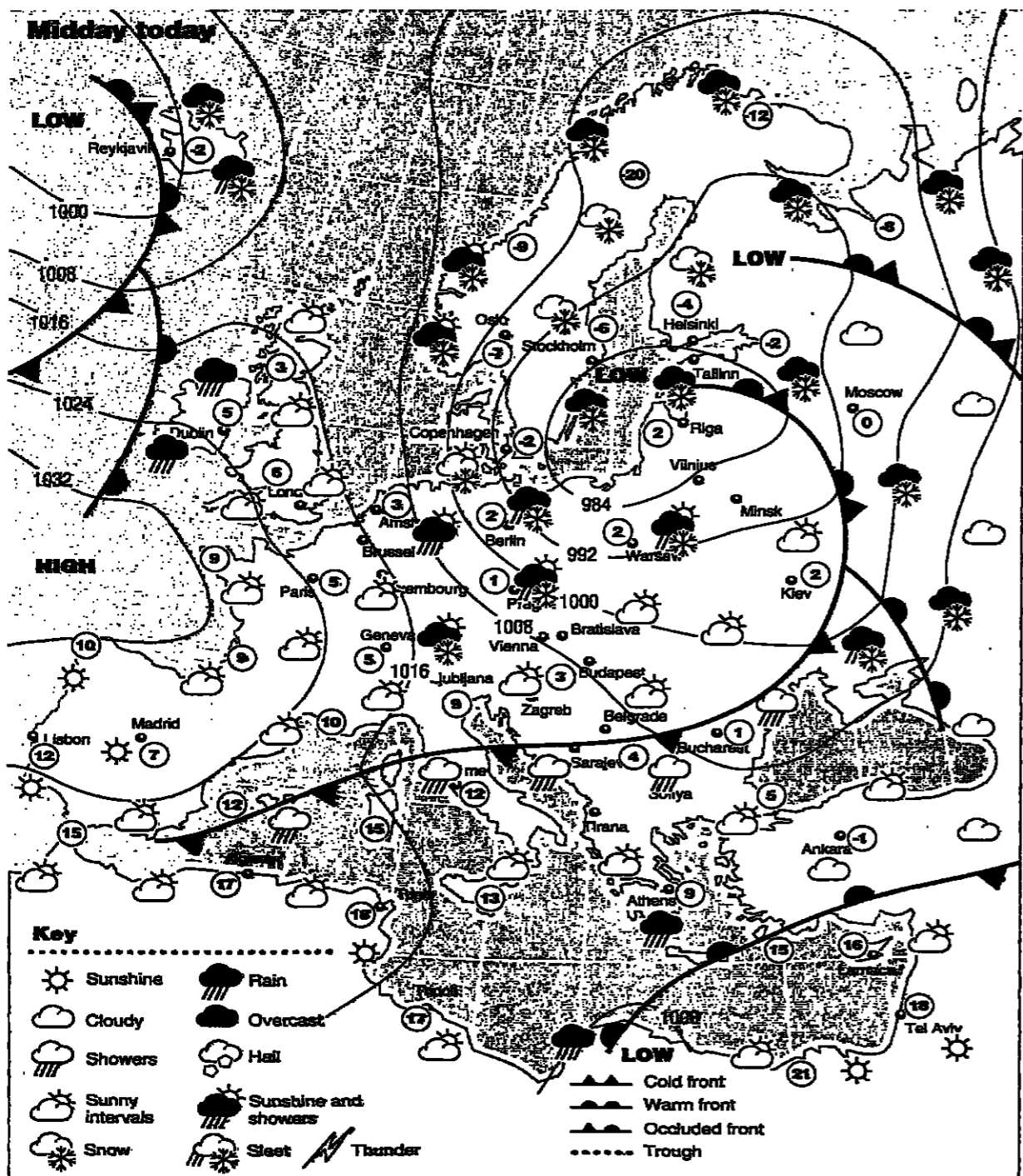
which is to be reserved for patients who can be cured.

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The weather in Europe



Forecast for the cities

City	Temp	Wind	Weather
London	11	S	Cloudy
Paris	10	S	Cloudy
Madrid	11	S	Sunny
Rome	12	S	Sunny
Amsterdam	10	S	Cloudy
Brussels	10	S	Cloudy
Copenhagen	10	S	Cloudy
Stockholm	10	S	Cloudy
Warsaw	10	S	Cloudy
Moscow	10	S	Cloudy
Beijing	10	S	Cloudy
Tokyo	10	S	Cloudy
Sydney	10	S	Cloudy
Auckland	10	S	Cloudy
Wellington	10	S	Cloudy
Christchurch	10	S	Cloudy
Dunedin	10	S	Cloudy
Hamilton	10	S	Cloudy
Palmerston North	10	S	Cloudy
Tauranga	10	S	Cloudy
Whangarei	10	S	Cloudy
Wellington	10	S	Cloudy
Christchurch	10	S	Cloudy
Dunedin	10	S	Cloudy
Hamilton	10	S	Cloudy
Palmerston North	10	S	Cloudy
Tauranga	10	S	Cloudy
Whangarei	10	S	Cloudy

Around the world

City	Temp	Wind	Weather
London	11	S	Cloudy
Paris	10	S	Cloudy
Madrid	11	S	Sunny
Rome	12	S	Sunny
Amsterdam	10	S	Cloudy
Brussels	10	S	Cloudy
Copenhagen	10	S	Cloudy
Stockholm	10	S	Cloudy
Warsaw	10	S	Cloudy
Moscow	10	S	Cloudy
Beijing	10	S	Cloudy
Tokyo	10	S	Cloudy
Sydney	10	S	Cloudy
Auckland	10	S	Cloudy
Wellington	10	S	Cloudy
Christchurch	10	S	Cloudy
Dunedin	10	S	Cloudy
Hamilton	10	S	Cloudy
Palmerston North	10	S	Cloudy
Tauranga	10	S	Cloudy
Whangarei	10	S	Cloudy

European weather outlook

This very cold winter is expected to continue with snow showers in many places, and some longer spells of snow over -2 to -10C but lower in the northern interior.

Spain, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechia, Slovakia

A bright and breezy day with a cool north-westerly wind bringing sunshine and showers to most regions, although Switzerland and Austria could have some longer spells of rain and hill snow at first. Max temp 3-7C. Watch out for a spell of severe winter weather early next week.

France

Eastern France may catch some light showers but much of the country will be fine and bright with broken cloud and sunny spells. Quite mild today with highs around 9C, but there will be a dramatic change to extreme cold on Monday and Tuesday.

Spain and Portugal

Mildly sunny today and tomorrow with half-decent temperatures (10-16C) but by Tuesday very cold air will sweep across both countries bringing a threat of snow showers to central and northern regions, and widespread night frosts.

A weak cold front will push south across the country today bringing isolated showers, but most places will stay fine and bright with some sunshine. Max temp 8-14C from north to south. Much more unsettled weather with plenty of rain is likely early next week.

The weather will be unsettled over southern Greece with heavy rain at first, but much drier and brighter in the north with pleasant sunny spells. Max temp 8-13C.

Television and radio - Saturday

BBC 1

8.25am News, 9.00am News, 9.30am News, 10.00am News, 10.30am News, 11.00am News, 11.30am News, 12.00pm News, 1.00pm News, 1.30pm News, 2.00pm News, 2.30pm News, 3.00pm News, 3.30pm News, 4.00pm News, 4.30pm News, 5.00pm News, 5.30pm News, 6.00pm News, 6.30pm News, 7.00pm News, 7.30pm News, 8.00pm News, 8.30pm News, 9.00pm News, 9.30pm News, 10.00pm News, 10.30pm News, 11.00pm News, 11.30pm News, 12.00am News.

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Atlantic grey seal



Gulliemot



Redshank



Razorbill



Curlew



Shelduck



Sheldrake



Gannet

THE extreme South-west coastline of Wales is one of Europe's most ecologically fragile and theoretically protected areas, writes John Vidal.

Protection of Birds and the National Trust properties. The islands of Skomer and Grassholm are European-designated nature reserves.

of complacency and cost-cutting, and called for an investigation into the incident.

learned any bloody lessons at all. "These incidents keep happening," said Dr Felton, who called for better risk assessment, tighter regulations on the movement of hazardous cargoes, and tanker exclusion zones from Britain's most sensitive coastal areas.

important breeding site for better-known marine life such as grey seals, said a spokesman for the Dyfed Wildlife Trust.

extremely vulnerable to oil pollution and feed in the waters of the haven.

and bottle-nosed dolphins are also at risk. Phil Rothwell, the RSPB's head of policy operations, said: "We are calling on the Government to conduct a full investigation of this incident in what is one of the most important and sensitive marine areas in Europe."

more than half a million sea birds will be returning to the area to breed, but it is still of great concern.

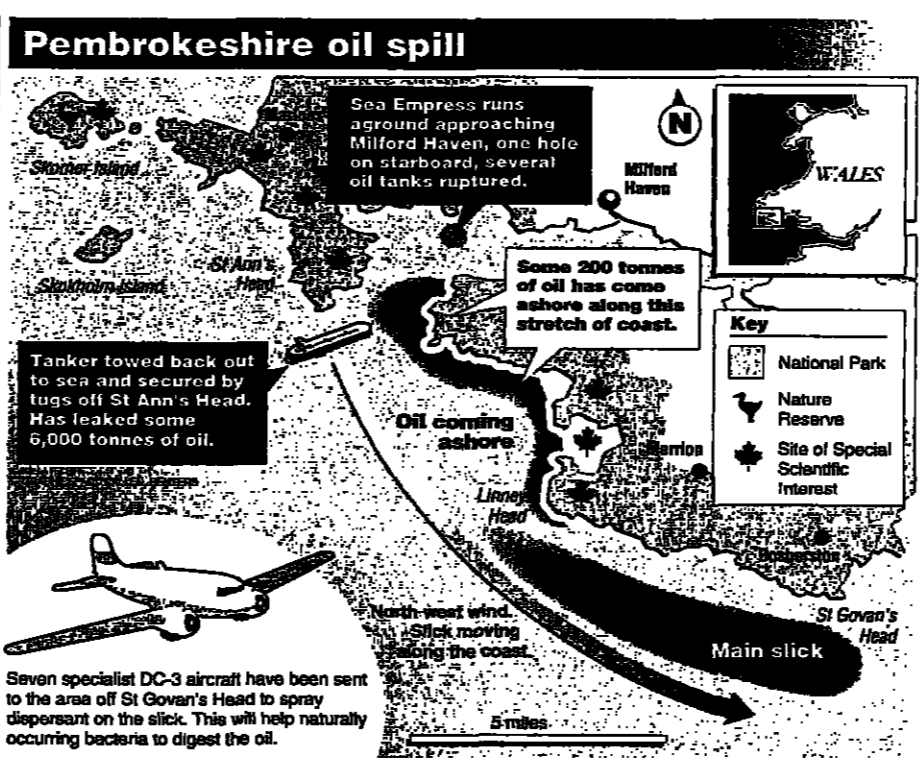
Playing Russian roulette with a natural paradise

Inquiry will examine failings of tough anti-pollution measures brought in after Braer disaster

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

AN INQUIRY was launched by the Department of Transport last night into why tough measures drawn up for ships in British waters after the Braer disaster three years ago failed to prevent the Milford Haven incident.

around British coasts. The code stressed the importance of testing ships' essential systems and prompt reporting to coastal authorities when experiencing difficulties which could lead to pollution.



Workers clear up some of the 200 tonnes of oil so far washed ashore from the grounded Sea Empress between St Ann's Head and Linney Head



PHOTOGRAPH WINSTON BYWORTH

Tugs clear to prevent pollution disaster as tanker oil slick heads for beaches

overwhelmed the salt air. Lying at the mouth of the estuary, the low hull of the Sea Empress was clearly visible wallowing in the afternoon swell.

Workers clear up some of the 200 tonnes of oil so far washed ashore from the grounded Sea Empress between St Ann's Head and Linney Head

to determine the cause of the accident but we are working closely with the authorities to find out what happened.

Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, flew by helicopter over the stranded vessel and was shown the main oil slick from the air.

After a briefing by harbour officials and the anti-pollution team, Sir George said all available equipment was being brought into the battle.

Lloyds TSB profits at £1.65bn but union warns of job cuts ahead

Pauline Springett

LOYDS TSB started the bank reporting season yesterday by announcing pre-tax profits of £1.65 billion for last year amid union warnings the newly merged group will shed 10,000 jobs and 650 branches.

UK bank profits	
Expected profits of UK banks, bn.	
Lloyds TSB	1.65
Barclays	2.20
Nat West	1.90
Midland	0.95
Abbey Nat	1.0



funded the sum. "I don't think it is at all exceptional," he said. The provision was mainly for paying for expected staff cuts, disposing of redundant premises, and streamlining computer systems.

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Her sexuality has been a constant source of speculation but no one appears to know for sure who she has loved and her songs are deliberately neutral, the lovers non-gender specific.

Joan Armatrading interviewed

Outlook page 77

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Former health secretary denies 'framing' doctor over death of patient flown 200 miles to find a bed

Libel court puts Bottomley in box

Sally Weale

VIRGINIA Bottomley, the former health secretary, appeared in court yesterday to deny allegations that she and others "framed" a hospital consultant over a patient's death in an attempt to distract media attention from a crisis in hospital beds.

In a rare appearance in the witness box by a cabinet minister, Mrs Bottomley was called to give evidence to the High Court in London by lawyers representing Mirror Group Newspapers, which is fighting a libel action over an article last March which branded the consultant "Doctor Dolittle".

Anthony Percy, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon at Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup, Kent, alleges that he was made a scapegoat for the patient's death and that Mrs Bottomley indicated in a memo that his role in the affair should be "flagged up" after learning that he was to be censured.

The patient, 45-year-old Malcolm Murray, died at Leeds General Infirmary last March after suffering a severe brain injury. He had been flown 200 miles from Queen Mary's because a neu-

rosurgical bed could not be found for him in the South-east.

The court heard that Mrs Bottomley, who spent 2½ hours in the box, had noted after reading a copy of the draft report on the incident: "What about the consultant refusing to appear?"

George Carman QC, for MGN, asked her if there was any truth in the suggestion that "in a very improper and unethical way" she had made

'As far as this individual case was concerned, it was deeply worrying'

the comment to frame Mr Percy and "make him a political football or sacrificial lamb".

Mrs Bottomley replied: "It's totally without substance and it's inconceivable I would respond in such a way."

Mr Percy, of Bickley, Kent, was on call the night Mr Murray was brought in but was not asked to go to the hospital and gave what administrative support he could over the telephone.

The Daily Mirror, which de-

nies libel, says its story was a fair and accurate account of a report by South Thames regional health authority.

Mrs Bottomley, now Heritage Secretary, dismissed Mr Percy's claim that she and others had used him to distract public attention from the problem of intensive care beds in the South-east.

She said she was so concerned about intensive care in general that she had called a meeting with leading medical figures and a report on the issue had been commissioned by her department.

"As far as this individual case was concerned, it was deeply worrying. Not only had somebody died, but the circumstances as I understood them worried me greatly — a junior doctor ringing round a number of hospitals and then the patient being flown to Leeds."

Mrs Bottomley insisted she had not influenced what went into the report on Mr Murray's death, and had nothing to do with the decision to censure him.

Her query about "the consultant refusing to appear" merely reflected her concern about publicly mentioning Mr Percy's role unless it had been substantiated.

The hearing continues on Monday.



Virginia Bottomley leaving the High Court yesterday after giving evidence in the libel case. PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MOORE

Another cold snap coming

SNOW and freezing temperatures are forecast for this weekend, and more snow is expected next week.

Most of Britain could be blanketed in snow by Sunday, with temperatures as low as minus 3C, the London Weather Centre said.

There would be heavy rain and cold winds through Saturday, said a spokesman. "There could be well be snow spreading from the North down through most of the country during Sunday."

Next week the South-east would take the brunt of the freeze.

Forecasters said this winter may soon compare with the coldest of the century, 1946-47, when snow fell from December to March.

AA Roadwatch said roads across the country would be gritted overnight.

South Wales Electricity, criticised two weeks ago when thousands of homes were left without power in freezing weather, is on alert for the next cold spell.

"We will have all available people on standby," a spokesman said. "Extra supplies of repair materials have been located throughout the region, and we are as prepared as we can be."

News in brief

20 held over fake passports

POLICE have arrested 20 people after finding fake and stolen passports buried in a back garden, it emerged yesterday.

Officers from the West Midlands involved in Operation Boss, carried out over the past week, were investigating handbag thefts in Birmingham city centre.

Those investigations led them to arrests in that region and in Staffordshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire.

It was during an arrest that police uncovered the bundle of passports. The discovery has led to the deportation of a number of people, although police will not confirm how many or if they were part of an organised immigration fraud. A police spokesman said: "A number of women will be appearing before the courts in Birmingham and Nuneaton over the next two weeks in connection with the investigations."

Mountaineers back protest

BRITISH mountaineers yesterday condemned colleagues employed to help erect the Newbury bypass tree climbers as "shameful" after national officers of the British Mountaineering Council and leading sportsmen described the Newbury protesters as "courageous defenders of the environment."

"If we do not disown and ostracise these mercenaries and renegades we are undermining the very reason for our existence and helping to accelerate the destruction of the very places we hold dear. They have nothing to do with climbing," author and climber Jim Perrin told the first British Mountain Festival at Llandudno.

"They are not welcome among us." Some protesters have been living in trees for six months and have built dozens of tree houses and miles of aerial pathways to delay the bypass. They were applauded by delegates. — John Vidal

Madonna sponsors show



MADONNA, the American singer and actress, has emerged as one of the principal sponsors of a major exhibition of the paintings by Jean-Michel Basquiat (left) at the Serpentine Gallery.

London, Basquiat, who came to prominence in New York in the early 1980s, was one of America's most feted young painters when he died, aged 27, in 1988 from a heroin overdose. Madonna was one of his closest friends.

The exhibition from March 6 until April 21 is also sponsored by Ally Capellino and European Investment managers in association with the Guardian and Kiss 100 FM radio station.

Sun's scoop of the year

STUART Higgins, editor of the Sun, yesterday received the scoop of the year award in the What the Papers Say awards for December's exclusive revelation that the Queen had urged the Prince and Princess of Wales to seek a divorce. The Daily Mail was named newspaper of the year, praised as a "technically brilliant product" which bucked the trend of falling tabloid sales.

Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary, praised national newspapers for their efforts to ensure publication last Saturday despite the IRA bomb, which damaged the Guardian's production plant and led to the evacuation of many newsrooms at Canary Wharf.

The other awards were: Commentator of the year: Anatole Kaletsky (the Times); General pleasure award: Bel Littlejohn (Guardian); Craig Brown, Wallace Arnold (Independent on Sunday); Gerald Barry award: Lord Deedes (Daily Telegraph); BBC Peter Black award for broadcasting writer of the year: Thomas Sutcliffe (the Independent). The ceremony is to be shown on BBC2 tonight at 6.55pm. — Andrew Cuff

Book thief don pays £160,000

AN Oxford don, who paid off his mortgage by selling rare antique books stolen from college libraries, was yesterday ordered by Northampton crown court to pay £160,000 in compensation.

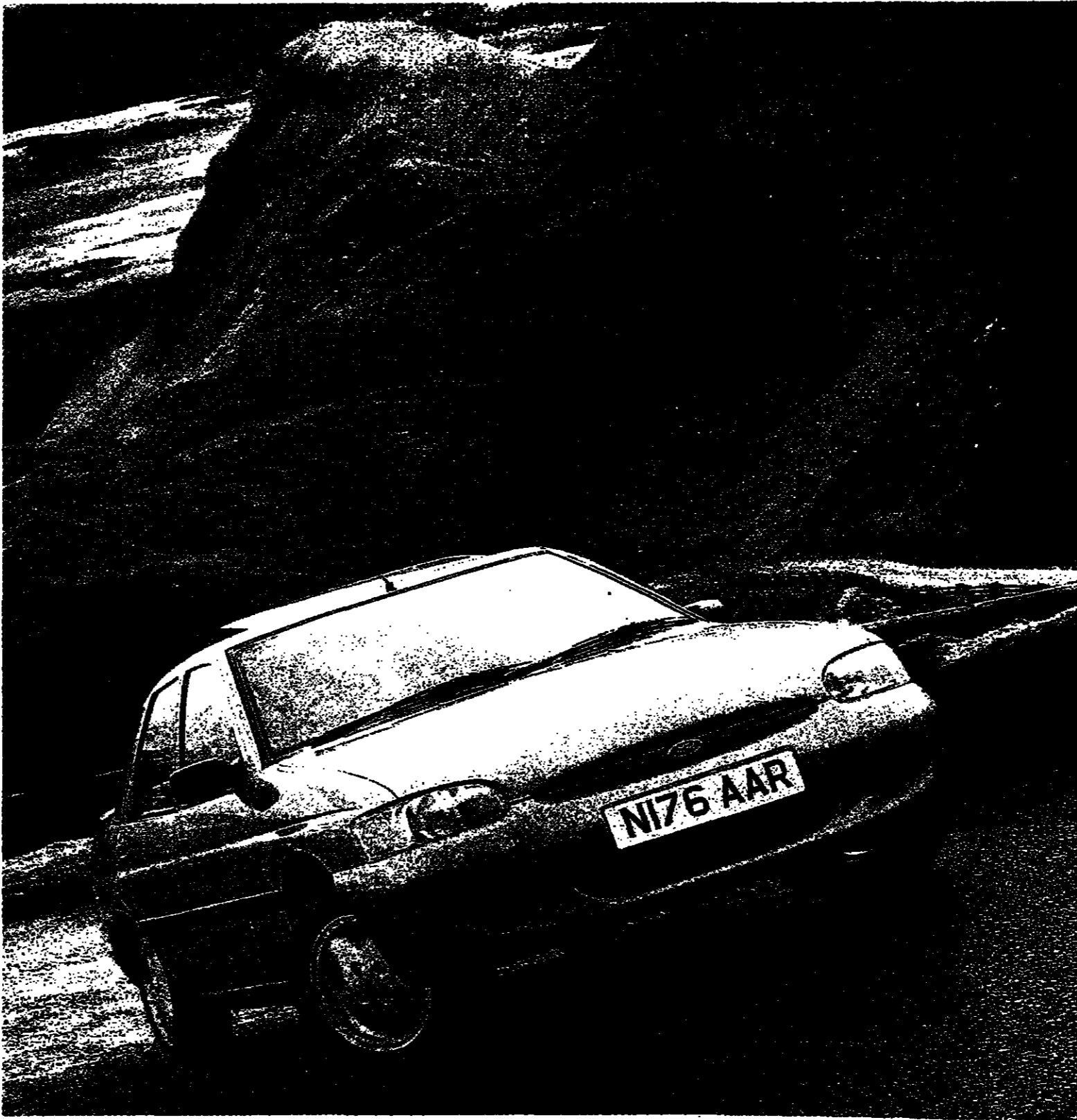
Part-time music lecturer and Radio 3 presenter, Dr Simon Heighes, stole 78 books and manuscripts over four years from Christ Church and Queen's Colleges and convinced antique experts they belonged to him.

One book, a 1686 first edition copy of Sir Isaac Newton's Principia Mathematica which had been kept by Christ Church College library for more than 300 years, was sold for £55,000.

Heighes, 33, from Oxford, was jailed for two years in December after admitting six counts of theft, five of obtaining property by deception and one of attempted deception. Another 113 offences were taken into consideration.

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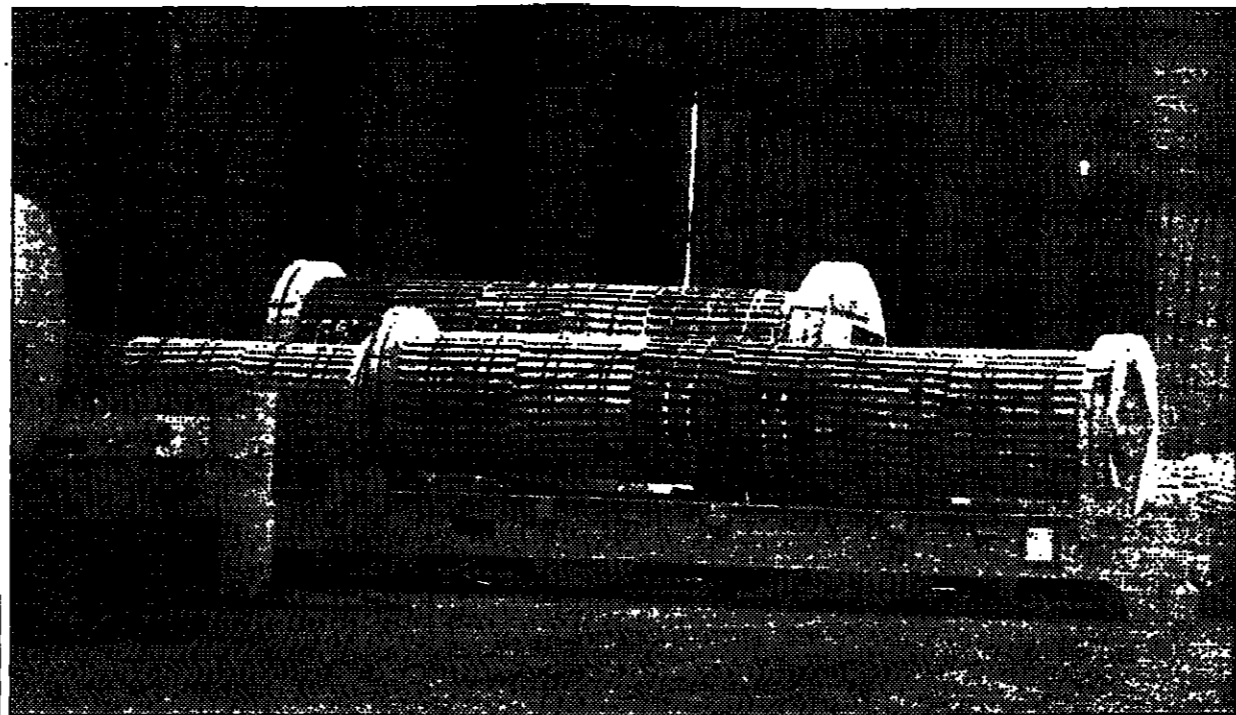
Whitehall tried to hide supergun blunders

David Pallister on a catalogue of intelligence failures uncovered by Scott

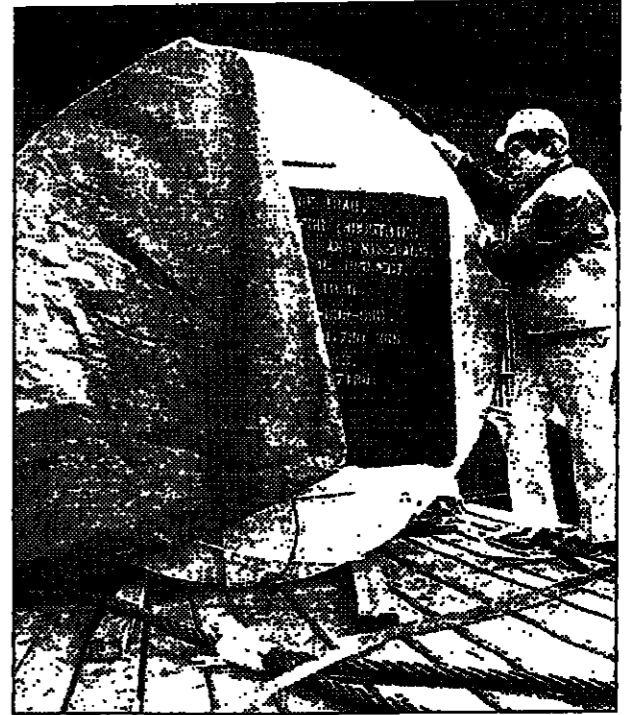
WHITEHALL officials altered drafts of a Commons statement in an attempt to conceal the extent of government knowledge of the Iraqi supergun, Sir Richard Scott's report has revealed.

The judge also criticises the former head of MI6, Sir Colin McColl, for apparently attempting to absolve MI6 from blame over the failure to act sooner on intelligence reports.

While the supergun barrels were only seized by Customs at Teesside in April 1990, Sir Richard said that suspicious should have aroused as early as June 1988. By October 1989 officials knew steel tubes made by the Walter Somers firm at Halesowen, West Midlands, were probably for artill-



British-made barrels destined to form part of the Iraqi supergun which were discovered by Customs officials at Teesside in April 1990



PHOTOGRAPHS: CARL RUTHERFORD

lery gun barrels. In the Commons on April 18 1990, the then trade and industry secretary, Nicholas Ridley, said the Government had only "recently" become aware of the supergun. Earlier drafts of Mr Ridley's statement referred to "last year" rather than "recently" and Sir Richard said: "The change in the text is consistent with an attempt to avoid criticism of the Government for not having acted sooner than it did."

He criticised officials of the Ministry of Defence, Department of Trade and Industry and MI6 for failing to keep records, to pass information and to act on intelligence reports. "Muddle," said Sir Richard, "had a part to play. But it went further than muddle."

Sir Colin is taken to task for an incorrect briefing to Sir Percy Cradock, the foreign policy adviser to the then prime minister, Lady Thatcher. Sir Colin suggested an MI6 briefing note of October 1989 which said it was known since June 1988 that Walter Somers was probably involved in supplying the supergun barrels was simply a mix-up by a "very junior" officer. Sir Richard said that "on one reading of the purpose of his letter, it was

a defensive operation to seek to distance SIS [MI6] from responsibility for the failure to act... Sir Colin's response to the inquiry was: "The job of SIS is to produce hard intelligence."

The first government information — "fragments", according to Sir Richard — of the supergun was supplied by the Tory MP, Sir Hal Miller. After being alerted to the suspicious order from Iraq by Walter Somers in June 1988, Sir Hal conveyed his concerns to the

MoD and the DTI. Within days the information was passed to MI6 and then MI5.

An MoD expert, Bill Weir, thought the tubes might be used for military research. An official in the Defence Intelligence Service suggested they might have nuclear research implications. But in the absence of firm information, the DTI said the tubes did not need export licences. In these exchanges officials failed to make proper records

and did not pass on the information to the DTI's special units looking at sensitive exports. "The Iraqi connection should have sounded alarm bells," Sir Richard said.

Mr Weir continued to talk to MI6 and MI5 officials and two briefing notes in 1988 referred to the Walter Somers order as possible guns. MI5 thought it was no concern of theirs.

During 1989 a Mr Q of MI6 became "the principal bound

in the hunt to uncover the details of the Iraqi long-range project," Sir Richard said. His main task was to find the "monster" barrels. "The barrels," Sir Richard remarked, "were in fact on the shop floor at Walter Somers."

By November, from other intelligence sources, the details of Iraq's supergun plans — Project Babylon — were circulated around Whitehall, including the Cabinet Office. But it was not until March 1990 that

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Links between MoD and arms firms criticised

Air chief met Iraqis as BAe executive, reports Richard Norton-Taylor

THE propriety of the close, almost symbiotic, links between arms companies and the Ministry of Defence — the "revolving doors" syndrome — is pointedly questioned in passages buried in Sir Richard Scott's 1,800-page report.

He learned that in one case a senior RAF officer met prospective Iraqi clients as a consultant to a private firm. On another occasion an executive of a large defence company seconded to the MoD

reverted to his former job for a few days so he could visit a Baghdad arms fair.

In 1986, at the height of the Iraq-Iran war, the Iraqi air force approached a British engineering firm, Tripod, for help in aviation medical research and flight simulators. Tripod approached the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine (IAM), then headed by Air Vice-Marshal Peter Howard, for advice.

Tripod told him that high-ranking Iraqi officers wanted to visit his institute. He replied that though it was inappropriate for the Iraqis to visit the IAM, he could meet them in a London hotel. There he was introduced as an RAF consultant in aviation medicine.

The air vice-marshal — who said he was unaware of government controls — told the inquiry he was "present

[at the meeting with the Iraqis] as a consultant to Tripod and did not represent the Royal Air Force or the Government".

Sir Richard describes the explanation as unsatisfactory, and that the meeting with the Iraqis was ill-judged. He says he accepts the air vice-marshal's denial that Tripod paid him.

In 1988 David Hastie, a senior British Aerospace executive, was seconded to the MoD's arms sales department, where he became involved in marketing Hawk, a BAe aircraft, while the company continued to pay his salary. Sir Richard says that Mr Hastie — through no fault of his own — was involved "in a position of potential conflict between interest and duty".

He says the point "is not simply an ancient principle of equity (which it is) but ought also, in my opinion, to be regarded as a necessary principle to be applied in all secondments to government service from industry. In the case of Mr Hastie the principle was evidently lost sight of."

Sir Richard notes that Sir Colin Chandler, then chief MoD arms salesman, and now chief executive of Vickers, and Mr Hastie, now its international sales executive, disagreed with his views.

In 1989, Mr Hastie reverted to becoming a BAe executive to attend the Baghdad arms fair which the Foreign Office had made out of bounds to MoD officials.

This led Alan Clark, then defence minister, to deny in the Commons that any "officials" from the MoD attended the fair.

Lawyers see end to gag orders

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

SIR RICHARD'S report would mean the end for "gagging orders" covering whole classes of documents in criminal cases, senior lawyers said yesterday.

Edmund Lawson, a leading QC specialising in white-collar crime, said Sir Richard's call for an end to class public interest immunity certificates — like those signed by ministers in the Matrix Churchill case — was the "final nail in the coffin" for their use in criminal cases.

Sir Richard argues for a tougher stance by judges faced with attempts to shield official documents from disclosure. In an area where the law is judge-made, he says, his interpretation of the law could be adopted without the need for legislation. Indeed, legislation would be undesirable.

In the Matrix Churchill case ministers claimed immunity as a class for advice between ministers and civil servants, communications between ministers, and security service and intelligence documents.

Class claims were also asserted in the first arms to Iraq case, involving Ordix. The defendants, who pleaded guilty, later had their convictions quashed by the Court of Appeal because relevant documents had not been disclosed.

Sir Richard would allow class claims in civil cases, and in criminal cases individual documents could still be protected from disclosure on the basis of their contents — so-called contents claims.

But even in those cases there would be no balancing exercise between the public interest in keeping documents secret and the public interest in not convicting an innocent person.

The only question to be asked was: is there a real possibility that the document would assist the defence?

Sir Richard says: "In criminal trials, once it has been decided that a document might be of assistance to the defence, that should be the end of the PII."

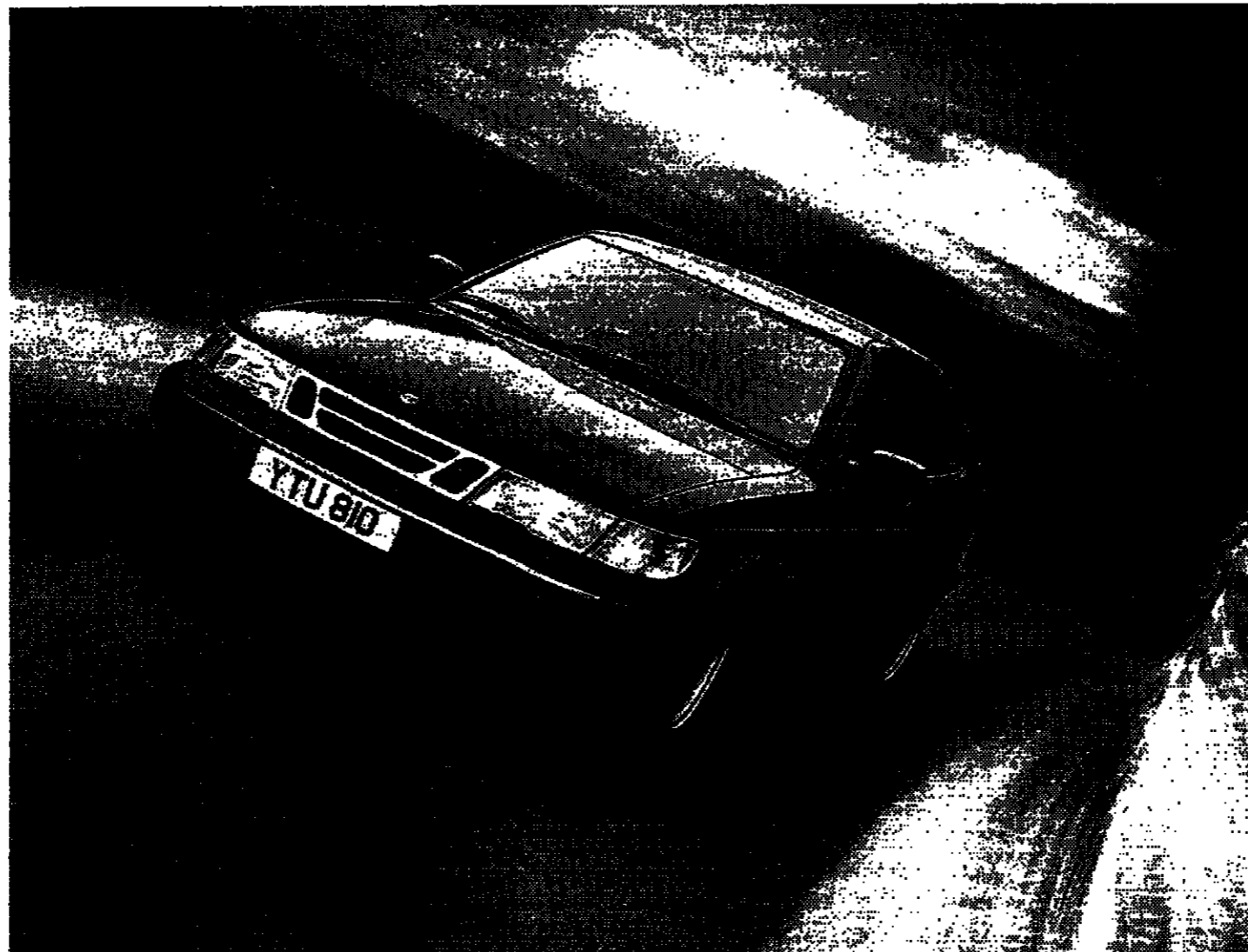
If that meant disclosing the identity of an informant or information that would endanger national security, the prosecution always had the option of dropping the case.

This goes further than the latest advice to the Attorney General, Sir Nicholas Lyell on the current state of the law.

His advice, from the Government's senior counsel, Stephen Richards QC, does not exclude class claims in criminal cases, and preserves a balancing exercise.

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Economic strides have failed to stem a drift away from González in the Spanish Socialists' heartland of Andalucía, writes Adela Gooch in Algamitas

Loyalists vie with youthful doubters in Felipe country

SIXTY miles east of Seville in the Sierra del Tablon, this is deep in Felipe country. "Even if I were the only Socialist left in Spain, even if my arms and legs had been cut off, I'd vote for him," Alberto Dovargane says.

Here, despite the reports of widespread corruption and wrongdoing by his administration, the Spanish prime minister, Felipe González, still commands striking loyalty. Mr Dovargane, a pensioner aged 69, is typical of the hardcore Socialist voter in the village of Algamitas (population 1,500), which regularly returns the highest proportion of Socialist votes in the country — up to 90 per cent.

"There is no hunger," he says. "People's pockets are full. I spent 12 years as an emigrant, working in Germany. Thanks to Felipe, I can live well here now." The village, nestled in a valley between the mountains, looks prosperous enough, with new houses, good facilities and streets lined with orange and lemon trees. But despite a

winter for the olive harvest," says David Smith, a British travel agent who owns a farmhouse hotel just outside the village. "They're good, hard-working people when there is work to be had." The local priest, Antonio Ceballos, aged 31, sums up the past 13 years, two weeks before the general election on March 3, which the polls suggest will be won by the conservative opposition Popular Party (PP). It is even possible that the Socialists will lose in their traditional stronghold of Andalucía, which holds regional elections on the same day.

"Socially, the advantages have been enormous," Fr Ceballos says. "Everyone is fed, clothed and educated. I've been working in the area for three years and no one has ever asked me for financial help." "The negative side? Well, unemployment. People work six months a year and then claim benefit. There isn't a real sustainable economy."

Much of the credit for the high Socialist vote here is due to Fernando Cuevas, aged 38, the mayor of Algamitas since 1983 and a committed Socialist much liked and admired by the villagers.

"Progress has been extraordinary," Mr Cuevas says. "Twenty years ago few houses in the village had bathrooms; now they all do. Fifteen years ago there were only four telephones; now there are 200. In 1982, before the Socialists came in, only 15 to 20 per cent of the population went on to secondary education; now 90 per cent do. When I was a student only 12 per cent went to university, now most do. Forty years ago the village was owned by four families; now the emigrants have come back to buy a little bit of land."

But he admits that the village depends heavily on money from the regional government for unemployment and agricultural benefits and to subsidise services, including regular visits by psychiatrists and social workers. Mr Cuevas shares the misgivings of the older population that the PP could eat into this type of spending.

"They will never look after the villagers the way Felipe has done," he says. "The PP vote is in the towns, not here."



Scraping a living... Grape harvesters in Andalucía, whose economy relies on seasonal migration. PHOTOGRAPH BY FIN COSTELLO

We suffered a four-year drought and the Socialists spent 1 billion pesetas (£5.4 million) on a new pipeline, bringing water to the area. The PP would never do that.

"Of course, we need to cut the deficit, stop waste; but just ensuring one multinational pays proper taxes does that better than cutting down on a small businessman and the benefit holder."

Yet opinion in the village is beginning to split along the same lines as the rest of the country. The older, non-employed are still loyal to the Socialists; those under 40 are drifting away.

"I don't know about voting for the PP," says a young

woman who runs one of the village's 12 bars with her husband. "But I think there will be quite a few blank votes this time."

A local policeman says: "Highest Socialist voting village in Spain, eh? We'll see about that."

The mayor admits that a change in voting patterns is likely. "Those stories of corruption in the press have done a lot of damage. And young people here are the same as everywhere else: they are tired of the Socialists."

But both Mr Cuevas and Mr Dovargane believe passionately in the integrity of Mr González.

"I have no doubt that the majority of Socialists are honest. But others came in and joined the party to make their fortune, as if this were Hollywood. They have let us all down," the mayor says.

"It's not Felipe González's fault that there were one or two rotten apples in the barrel. He can't keep his eye on everyone," Mr Dovargane says.

As evening draws in, the older people cluster around the main square. They mention how tranquil and peaceful life in Algamitas is. But it was not always so.

Mr Dovargane says: "I was one of nine children. My parents were shot in the civil war, taken away to Falange [the official Fascist party] headquarters, and I never

saw them again. I respect everyone's views. But how can I vote for the right?"

In rural communities such as this, history is not easily forgotten.

Of nine council members, seven are Socialist, one United Left — the party made up mainly of former Communists — and one PP.

"The PP here are the descendants of the former Franco supporters," the mayor says. "It is natural; family loyalties run deep."

Yeltsin calls a round for the vodka vote

James Week in Moscow

BORIS YELTSIN presented himself as the drinkers' friend yesterday with a pledge not to increase vodka prices.

It was the latest promise from the ailing president, known to enjoy a drop of "the bitter" himself, as he continues his campaign swing through the Urals in the hope of re-election in June.

He reminded factory workers in Chelyabinsk of the long queues for vodka in the Soviet era and said that some advisers had urged him to increase the price. "I consider this incorrect," he said. "We need to find other sources to fill up the budget so as not to worry people."

The fuel-price factor has always been politically crucial in a country where beer is seen as a soft drink and wine effete.

The ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy has often promised voters cheap or free vodka and has an own-label brand.

Mr Yeltsin's main rival, the Communist candidate Gennady Zyuganov, claims that vodka is the only consumer item in Russia which is cheaper now than in Soviet times.

A litre of drinkable vodka can be bought in street kiosks for £2. "There are only three human rights in Russia today," Mr Zyuganov said at the Communist convention this week, which nominated him its presidential candidate.

"The right to steal, the right to get drunk, and the right to have no responsibilities."

As Mr Yeltsin campaigned, two of his former allies were

trying to come to terms with what appeared to be politically-inspired moves against them.

The former general prosecutor Alexei Lyushchenko — just a few months ago one of the most powerful men in Russia — was preparing to spend a second night in one of Moscow's remand prisons on suspicion of involvement in a deal by which a second-hand car dealership acquired a licence to export 25 million tonnes of oil.

Other arrests may follow as the president tries to give the impression that he is purging the administrative elite of corruption.

Meanwhile there were fears of increasing presidential control over the media as Oleg Poptsov, sacked by Mr Yeltsin as head of the country's second biggest channel, Russian TV, warned against a return to authoritarianism.

Speaking of the "widened situation" that the media would decide the outcome of the election, he said: "To set up one's own pocket television company, one's own radio station, one's own newspaper, is practically to return to the time when the central committee of the Communist Party was the proprietor of all the media."

Mr Poptsov was replaced by Eduard Sagdiyev, head of the popular commercial channel TV-6, which is long on entertainment and short on news.

The other leading channel in Russia, ORT, was handed to a circle of Yeltsin-friendly businessmen in 1994 and its news programmes loyally follow the government line.

Beauty is up there in red lights, Outlook, page 19

Swedish woman refuses to deny rumours of Mitterrand love child

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

FRANCE was speculating yesterday about the motives of a Swedish woman who refuses to deny press rumours that she has a son of seven by the late president François Mitterrand.

Chris Forsne, aged 47, a television journalist based in Paris until last year, told a Swedish tabloid newspaper that she was "very, very close" to Mitterrand, who died last month from prostate cancer.

She refused to tell Aftonbladet who was the father of her son, Ravn, adding: "I believe I have good reasons to neither confirm nor deny the rumour."

Speaking from her home in the Swedish city of Gothenburg, she told the Guardian yesterday: "If I have matters to settle with anyone, I can do so without the help of the press."

French magazines are trying to prove that Mitterrand, 79 when he died, had three mistresses: one in France, one in Venice and Ms Forsne.

Anne Pinget, his French mistress, attended his funeral, with Mazarine, their 21-year-old daughter.

Aftonbladet published a picture of Ms Forsne with Ravn shortly after he was born. It also had a photograph of Ms Forsne dining with Mr and Mrs Mitterrand and their divorced son, Jean-Christophe, in 1982.

The French magazine VSD published pictures yesterday of Ravn, who is ash-blond.

This prompted speculation that he might be Jean-Christophe's son, especially since Mitterrand underwent his first prostate operation in 1976.

Remaking the Mitterrand legend, Outlook, page 19

Unhappy hippy sees his dreams go up in smoke

Swedish authorities are stepping up their fight against drugs, writes Greg McIvor

BEHIND the counter of his Happy Head Shop, Mats Ohnell is anything but happy. Since starting his business two months ago, the owner of Stockholm's first emporium for cannabis aficionados has faced eviction threats, police raids and moral indignation.

Last week three plainclothes detectives stepped into his orange-walled, incense-filled parlour and, without a warrant, seized all the cannabis pipes on his shelves.

Deprived of his stock, Mr Ohnell fears bankruptcy. "I've done nothing illegal but I've been branded a criminal," he says. "I don't sell drugs. I sell pipes, books and cannabis seeds, all of which are permitted by law."

Sweden has for years been tough on drugs, and pressure is building up for still stronger measures to stem a growth in narcotics abuse among teenagers.

Figures released this week revealed that drug abuse rose

50 per cent among youngsters in Stockholm last year. Children as young as 10 are experimenting with marijuana and ecstasy.

"The most frightening thing is that youngsters today don't see smoking cannabis as dangerous," says Mia Sundelin, head of the anti-drugs trust Hassela Solidarity.

"They believe that as long as you don't inject a substance it is okay. Five years ago such attitudes hardly existed."

Official figures put the number of drug abusers at 20,000 in a population of 8.7 million, although social workers say the true figure is far higher.

In Sweden all drugs are viewed as equally iniquitous, from heroin to hashish. The maximum 10-year prison sentence for possession covers all controlled substances.

The authorities deny that the attitude, rooted in Lutheran traditions, is repressive. "We are restrictive

rather than repressive. All abuse begins with soft drugs. Just concentrating on heroin and cocaine will never allow you to tackle the problem properly," Ms Sundelin said.

Offenders who are caught can expect a rigorous follow-up procedure of regular urine tests.

Younger abusers are often confronted with a bald choice: be sent to an institution or accept treatment.

While this approach worked relatively well in the 1970s and 1980s, integration with Europe has coincided with a relentless increase in drug inflows across the border.

Poor co-ordination between official bodies and inadequate funding are hampering counter measures. Experts warn of a social explosion within two years unless big preventative programmes are introduced.

The main worry for policymakers is that increasing numbers of youngsters are heeding the message of people like Mr Ohnell who insist that the problem is not cannabis but society's warped attitude to its users.

World news in brief

Nigeria frees BBC reporter after 24 hours detention

THE Nigerian security police last night released the BBC correspondent in Nigeria, Hilary Anderson, after more than 24 hours in detention, writes Chris McGreal in Lagos.

Ms Anderson, an American citizen who arrived in Nigeria only last week, was arrested and interrogated by

the State Security Service in Lagos on Thursday after investigating a rumour that the military leader, General Sani Abacha, had been overthrown. The story proved false and was not reported.

Ms Anderson was escorted from the security police headquarters to American diplomatic premises.

Italy sets date for elections

President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro dissolved both houses of parliament last night, clearing the way for a general election on April 21, writes John Hooper in Rome. The cabinet decided the date at an emergency session.

A ballot became inevitable when Antonio Maccanico, chosen by President Scalfaro to form a government, told him it was impossible.

Refugees isolated

Zaire sealed off a second Rwandan refugee camp yesterday and indicated that it would continue to crack down on camp leaders opposed to repatriation and restrict the

activities of aid agencies in the 42 border camps. — AP.

Ebola outbreak

The World Health Organisation said yesterday that it was investigating a suspected outbreak of Ebola fever in Gabon which has killed 10 people and put nine others in hospital, Chris Millar reports.

Smugglers held

Four men have been arrested for allegedly smuggling hundreds of Iraqis into Sweden last year for 25,500 each, police said yesterday. — AP.

No going back

Portugal will return to being one hour behind most of Europe by not switching clocks back an hour on March 31. — Reuter.

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From a western perspective, it seems inconceivable that the first generation of artists to be freed from the bondage of Soviet cultural control should harbour nostalgia for totalitarian certainties, that they should hark back to "Socialist Realism". St Petersburg artists Outlook page 19

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Rivalry and corruption cripple the self-help economy

Suzanne Goldenberg in Sharifpur finds that this week's flawed election is just the latest of many ways the rulers have failed the people

IT IS their proudest possession, the reward after years of doing without — a television aerial lashed to the top of a spindly length of bamboo so high that the whole village can admire it.

Mohammed Muslehuddin Sarkar had been hankering after a set of his own ever since Bangladesh television went on air 1964, and his longing grew almost unbearable six years ago after they began to arrive in the homes of his more prosperous neighbours in Sharifpur, a village just north of the capital, Dhaka.

His wife, Halima Begum, made it happen. Persuaded eight years ago by a government social worker to contribute 100 takas a month (about £1.60) to a savings scheme, she begged money off her husband, and sold milk from the cows that loiter behind their tin-roofed home until her nest-egg grew to 13,115 takas (about £215), including interest.

The family scraped together an extra few thousand takas, and six months ago the colour television was theirs. "I had never seen so much money before in my life," Halima

Begum said. "Sometimes it was very hard to save. There were times when I could not give. The children had to go to school, and I had to find the money for their books."

The savings scheme has since been withdrawn. A casualty of its own popularity, it became too expensive for the government. Halima Begum disapproves. "To my judgment, it's a bad thing. For women like us, it's our only chance to save money. If I leave it in the house, the chances are that I will spend it." So that means goodbye to the chances of acquiring a refrigerator, or (if her husband had his way) another small plot of land.

Mr Sarkar and Halima Begum were already doing better than the vast majority of the 120 million people in Bangladesh, nearly half of them so poor they eat fewer than 2,100 calories a day — the minimum for survival.

Their relatively small family of four children will probably do even better. Their eldest son is a law student — still a novelty in a village which has produced one professional in the last 10 years, an engineer now working in Kuwait.

But economists say the small measure of mobility this family enjoys owes little to any government initiative. Although it still ranks among the dozen poorest countries in the world, Bangladesh has been rising out of poverty, consigning Henry Kissinger's "international basket case" to history.

Its reputation nowadays owes more to the success of non-governmental ventures like the Grameen bank, which keeps its 2 million mainly female borrowers out of the grip of rapacious village moneylenders, and has spawned copy-cat projects by the World Bank and other institutions. The official story, by contrast, has been one of repression and misrule.

BANGLADESH will be 25 years old in December this year. Three million people died in the uprising against Pakistan; they left their children a country in which military dictators have ruled for 15 years.

During the 1980s, General Hussain Mohammed Ershad presided over a particularly

corrupt and incompetent administration. Rich factory owners siphoned off 42 per cent of the country's power supply, and much the same happened to the other essential services.

But the introduction of economic reforms after the restoration of democracy in 1991 led to modest improvements. The relatively new garment industry became the country's largest foreign exchange earner. Economic growth rose to 6.5 per cent — close to the rates that propelled Taiwan and South Korea forward and inflation fell to record lows. Foreign exchange reserves grew tenfold from 1991, while the savings rate, a crucial indicator of economic success, doubled to 12 per cent of GDP. And while foreign investment didn't exactly pour in, there were definite signs of interest.

The broad picture was that in spite of it all, there have been some signs of positive trends, said Wahiduddin Mahmud, president of the Bangladesh Economic Association.

But the good times still passed tens of millions of people by. Purbo Hajipura is

a Dhaka slum whose misery is defined by the fact that its people do not even live on dry land, but in corrugated tin huts perched on stilts above a swamp. The people here lack the skills or education to profit from economic liberalisation, and they have been overlooked by social workers.

"We have never seen any development or any change in our lives," said Habibur Rahman, a vegetable vendor, who came to the city because he could not survive in his village. Here he shares a tin shack, an oven in the summer heat, with one other family.

A cycle rickshaw driver from the same district chimes in. "We are poor people, and we don't know what is in store for our children either." Mr Rahman sums it up. "To me, development means the price of rice. And no matter who the Rajah or Rani is, the price of rice goes up."

Economists believe the unrest of the last two years has scythed the country's growth rate back to 4 per cent. Foreign aid donors cut their contributions from 2 billion dollars to 1.6 billion dollars. Agricultural production dropped so steeply that Bangladesh had to start importing rice again. All that had been achieved in the earlier part of the 1990s was coming undone. "The Bangladesh economy is coming to a crisis," Professor Mahmud said.

THERE are few signs that the government will heed the warnings. Although Mrs Zia's ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) romped home with 167 out of 168 seats declared by last night in Thursday's general election, it was not what could normally be considered a victory.

Sheikh Hasina's Awami League and the other main opposition parties boycotted the polls in a protest against Mrs Zia's failure to make way for a neutral, caretaker government that would oversee the elections.

Reports of systematic ballot-stuffing at what was essentially a one-party poll on Thursday support their contention that Mrs Zia's government was incapable of conducting a fair vote.

Though it is difficult to be certain just how low the turnout was because of BNP fraud, the opposition is claiming 95 per cent of voters stayed away. Foreign monitors have put the figure at about 80 per cent. But Mrs Zia said: "If it is a democratic vote then a 10 per cent turnout has to be accepted."

Her determination to continue in office, tempered by talks with a view to holding fresh elections, is matched by Sheikh Hasina, who is possessed by the idea of forcing her out. The consequences of their personal feud are ruinous.

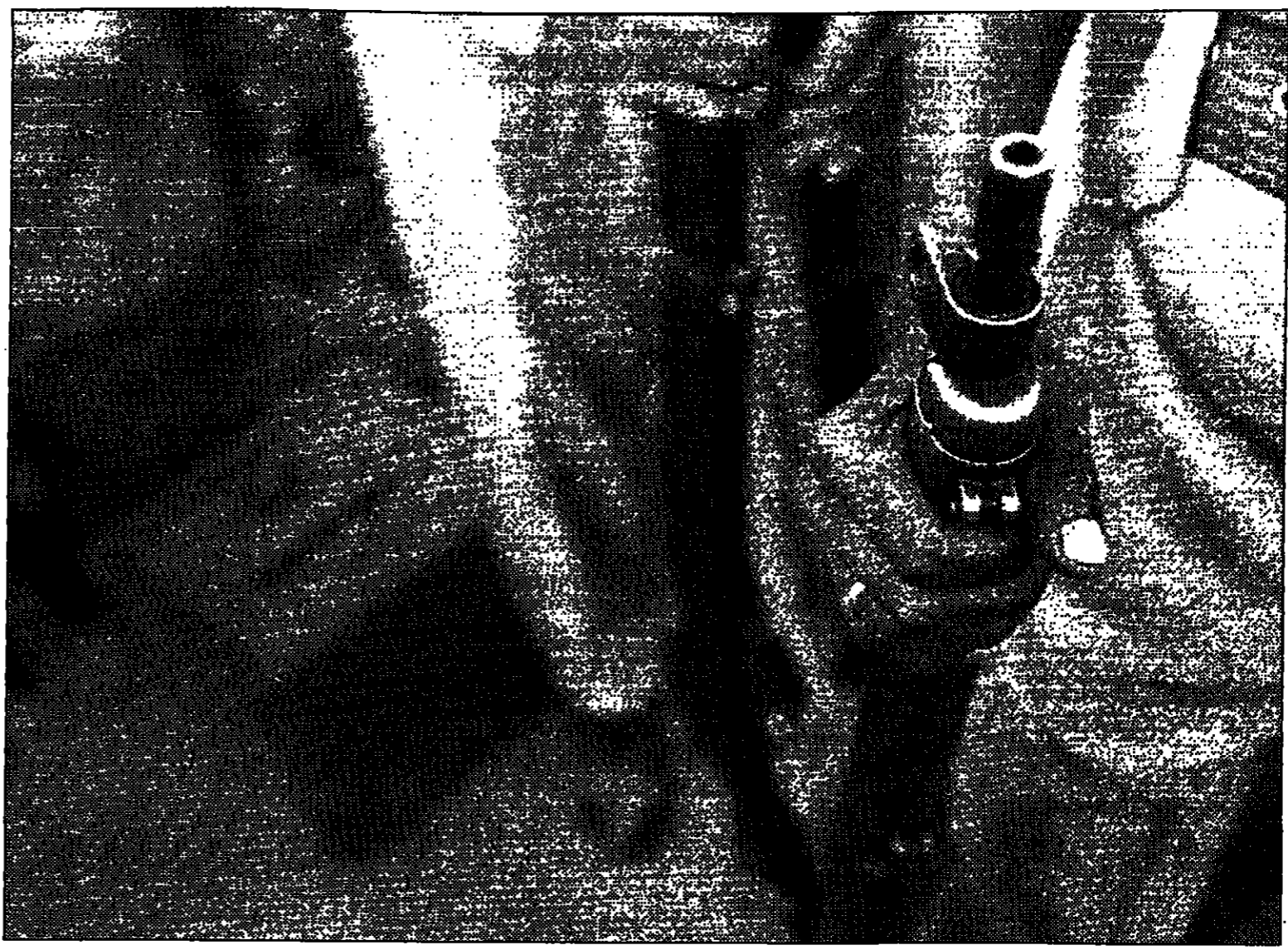
One Western diplomat says the crisis "has weakened whatever competence there was in government to take on reforms."

More important are the questions it raises about whether Bangladesh can establish a stable democracy. Human rights activists fear the elections gave an opportu-

nity to the army, chastened after Gen Ershad's fall and confined to barracks, to play a larger role in public life. Lawyers say soldiers searching for illegal weapons in the village of Char Svedpur last month smashed up homes, and beat up 200 people. It is the first rights case to be filed against the armed forces since the restoration of civilian rule.

There are also fears that the relics of Gen Ershad's supporters in the Jatiya Party, as well as the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami, who also boycotted Thursday's vote, may ultimately gain from the crisis.

Sheikh Hasina is aware of all this, but it has not put a brake on her single-minded campaign to remove the prime minister. The enmity between the two women is itself dangerous, commentators fear.



Guarded answer... Security forces protect the ballot boxes in Dhaka after Thursday's election

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MOORE

A hard route out of servitude

Arshad Mahmud in Dhaka

TRADITION once said a village girl should marry early — sometimes even before puberty. But that was before the arrival of a thriving new industry which has given

its mainly female employees a rare measure of control over their lives.

A decade ago, Sufia Akhter, aged 19, would already have been married off. But four years after she started work sewing skirts at a garment factory in Dhaka suburb, she says: "I

really don't have time to think about it." And then returns her attention to her sewing machine.

Sufia is one of 1.2 million people employed in Bangladesh's garment industry, 85 per cent of them women. The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies says

75 per cent of them are villagers and 60 per cent unmarried.

Many of them, like Sufia, are the family's main wage earners, enhancing their status in the family and reshaping this largely Muslim society. Marriage would put an end to that.

Demographers believe the availability of socially acceptable employment for unskilled women is leading to later marriages, which could help in population control.

Last year garment exports reached \$1.6 billion, nearly two-thirds of the country's export earnings.

Economists link the success of the 15-year-old industry to its relative freedom from government control and the relocation of garment makers from Sri Lanka because of its civil war.

But the real growth came when the United States and the European Union relaxed quotas. The two markets now import 95 per cent of Bangladesh's finished garments.

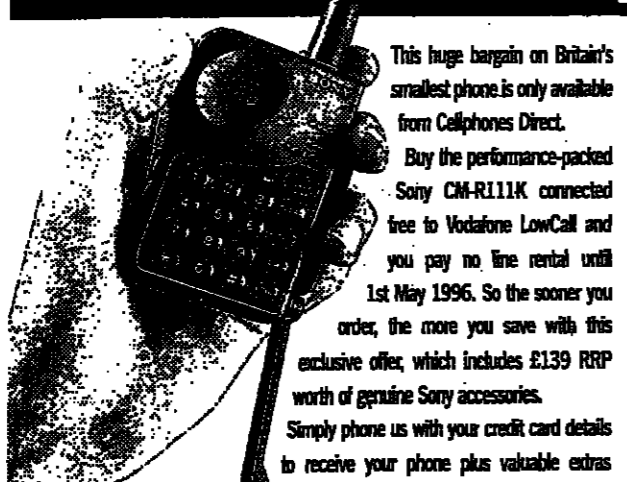
However, the women's activist Khusi Kabir says the industry has not really liberated women. Bred to subservience, she said, women will work for a paltry sum and accept harsh conditions. At Sufia's factory, 500 women share two toilets. They work at least a 12-hour shift, more if the manufacturer is facing a deadline.

Rafwan Ahmed, president of the garment industry employers' association, agrees that women are more docile employees than men. "If I have 400 male workers, they immediately start making union politics. Not the women," he said.

But despite complaints about long hours, the garment workers say they have benefited from the opening up of the industry. There are few other opportunities for women, and the average monthly wage of \$20 is almost three times the national average.

"I'm not claiming that they are comfortable here," said Kazi Salahuddin, factory manager of Real Fashion. "But without this sector these women would have ended up as maid servants, prostitutes or in back-breaking construction sites."

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Cricket

England kept in the dark

David Hopps

ENGLAND'S uninspired performance and defeat in their opening World Cup match was followed yesterday by evidence of shoddy planning as they admitted that they knew next to nothing about tomorrow's opponents, the United Arab Emirates.

Vague plans to watch the UAE's opening match against South Africa on television on Thursday were dashed when it was washed out. When the match did take place in Rawalpindi yesterday, England had to grab what they could by way of information during a tortuous day's travel en route to Peshawar.

"Basically, all we know about them is what we've read in some newspapers," said the England captain Mike Atherton, sitting down in front of a television on a stopover in Delhi.

All he was able to see was all too familiar: South African batsmen taking the bowling apart.

Hope is about the best that England can offer after a defeat against New Zealand, characterised by slovenly fielding, wayward bowling and hesitant batting.

The bookmakers, however, seem better informed, with England quoted at 40/1 on to win tomorrow's match.

England's mood will not be enlivened by heavy security in Peshawar. The England team, billeted there late last year, were forced to do much



Over and out... the Emirates batsman Mazhar Hussain gets a taste of life in the fast lane as Donald strikes in Rawalpindi

of their fitness work in the hotel gymnasium. Graeme Hick, Dominic Cork and Robin Smith face fitness tests before tomorrow's game, with Hick and Cork the likeliest to get the nod. Hick is the only batsman remotely in form, and his off-spin is also likely to play a valuable containing role throughout the tournament.

The spinner Neil Smith and seamer Phillip DeFreitas, both omitted from the New Zealand match, will hope to figure this time after the disappointing team performance in Ahmedabad.

Kapil Dev and Zaheer Abbas, former captains of India and Pakistan respectively,

have added their voices to the clamour for the ICC to be given wider powers to manage the international game. Kapil Dev, describing the ICC as "toothless", also called for Australia and West Indies to be banned for at least a year for refusing to play in Sri Lanka in the wake of the separatist bomb in Colombo.

Zaheer, writing in the Asian Age newspaper, said: "For too long now we have been hearing about how the ICC cannot interfere in the affairs of its member nations. If this is so, it is time that some changes were made in its constitution and some more powers given to it to take strong decisions."

Zimbabwe swept aside by Ambrose and Lara

WEST INDIES displayed all their old professionalism yesterday with a crushing six-wicket victory over Zimbabwe in their opening Group A match in Hyderabad.

Inspired by the Man of the Match Curtly Ambrose, who took a wicket in each of his three spells, West Indies restricted the Zimbabweans to 151 for nine in their 50 overs. Sherwin Campbell then played the anchor role with 47 as West Indies coasted to victory under the lights at Lal Bahadur Stadium.

With the result a foregone conclusion, the crowd began to chant for Brian Lara and he was greeted with a huge ovation when he came to the wicket with his team needing only 73 to win.

The Trinidad did not disappoint, bringing up West Indies' 100 with an effortless pull six into the stands. He ended the match after his side had batted only 29.3 overs with another huge six over long to finish unbeaten on 43 off 31 deliveries.

Paul Strang created a brief sensation when he dismissed Campbell, Richie Richardson (82), Shivnarine Chanderpaul (8) and Keith Arthurton (1) in an excellent spell of brisk leg-spin to finish with four for 40 from 7.3 overs. But it was too late for Zimbabwe and Lara's cameo display only underscored West Indies' supremacy. Holland begin their campaign against New Zealand in today's only match in Baroda. Tomorrow India are guaranteed a raucous reception when they face Kenya in Cuttack.

Racing

Vicompt can make his stamina tell

Ron Cox

FOLLOWING heavy rain, it was touch and go earlier this week about Newcastle's richest ever jumps card going ahead today and the emphasis on stamina will be stronger than ever in the featured Tote Eider Chase over four miles and a furlong.

A good recent run should be worth its weight in gold, and one contender who has an edge in this department is Vicompt de Valmont, who was in action at Newbury only last Saturday.

Predictably, this out-and-out stayer found even three and a quarter miles an inadequate test, but he finished with a flourish to take third place behind Sunley Bay and Dextra Dove and that should have put him spot on.

Basically, no distance is far enough for Vicompt de Valmont, who is a bit of a character but has run really well on his last two starts without his customary blunders.

Beaten three lengths by Kildashin over four and a quarter miles at Tamworth last month, the 11-year-old meets that rival 10th bet today and around a year ago he ran well in much better class when fourth behind Nuffield from well out of the handicap in the Greenalls Gold Cup at Haydock.

Paul Nicholls's veteran was just half a length behind third-placed Superior Finish that day and re-opposes on 16th better terms now.

Under an inspired ride from Adrian Maguire, Super Finish finished like a train to collar Sibton Abbey at Sandown last time. His previous third in the Hennessy was a sound effort, but jockey Rodney Farrant will certainly earn his fee today.

It would be a tremendous training performance by Mar Tin Pipe should Lord Ralic manage to overcome such a lengthy absence. At his best he is the class act.

A 7lb rise in the weights overnight has done Lord Ralic no favours, but that leaves Vicompt de Valmont (4.10) just 2lb off his proper mark.

He can prove a good chance for Tony Dobbin, who has been unfortunate to miss out on some big prizes so far this season.

The Nicholls stable may also be on the mark at Chesham with Court Melody (2.10) in the Snaffles Handicap Chase.

Unlike Vicompt de Valmont, Court Melody has shown improved form since fitted with blinkers and Tony McCoy's mount ran well in the Sister Stephanie at Newton Abbot last time when trying to give away 19lb.

Swinburn on the mend

WALTER SWINBURN is continuing his recovery after the horrific fall he suffered at Sna Tm last Sunday. The 34-year-old jockey has pleased doctors with his rapid progress and is now breathing without the aid of a ventilator, writes Ken Oliver.

He is also off morphine and his next hurdle is to clear his lungs of the congestion which has accrued since the accident.

Swinburn's brother, Michael, said yesterday: "The doctors are amazed at the only thing they are worried about is if he should catch pneumonia. But if he doesn't, he is home and dry."

"He even told dad to go off and play golf or something. It was just his way of saying, 'It's all right - you've got to have to keep hanging around the hospital.'"

Newcastle with form for the TV races

- 1.25 Mearns News
1.35 The Grey Monk
2.30 Curlew Lay
3.00 Strong Deal
3.25 Cheery Crusader
4.10 VICOMPT DE VALMONT (mop)
4.40 Tempale

Collegiate, 50th Chase, Good to soft, 5. Dunshee Milliner, Pines in hand, after 100 yds, drops down 100 yds.

Table with 3 columns: Race number, Race name, and Winner/Details. Includes races like 1.25 LEVY ROAD HURDLE, 1.35 THE GREY MONK, 2.30 CURLEW LAY, 3.00 STRONG DEAL, 3.25 CHEERY CRUSADER, 4.10 VICOMPT DE VALMONT, 4.40 TEMPALÉ.

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Chesham card with form for the televised races

- 1.00 Empower
1.30 Newmill Ltd
2.00 Hope And Pops
2.25 Seek The Faith
3.00 Conclude
3.40 Court Melody (m)
4.15 Prince Of Saturns

Collegiate, 50th Chase, Good to soft, 5. Dunshee Milliner, Pines in hand, after 100 yds, drops down 100 yds.

Table with 3 columns: Race number, Race name, and Winner/Details. Includes races like 1.00 EMPPOWER, 1.30 NEWMILL LTD, 2.00 HOPE AND POPS, 2.25 SEEK THE FAITH, 3.00 CONCLUDE, 3.40 COURT MELODY (M), 4.15 PRINCE OF SATURNS.

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- 2.35 VILVONOV HURDLE
1.25-34 SHAK THE PATE (m)
3.55-60 PETE THE PARSON (m)
3.40-45 WINTER (m)
3.05 SWIFTHURD HURDLE
1.25-34 SHAK THE PATE (m)
1.25-34 SHAK THE PATE (m)
1.25-34 SHAK THE PATE (m)

Collegiate, 50th Chase, Good to soft, 5. Dunshee Milliner, Pines in hand, after 100 yds, drops down 100 yds.

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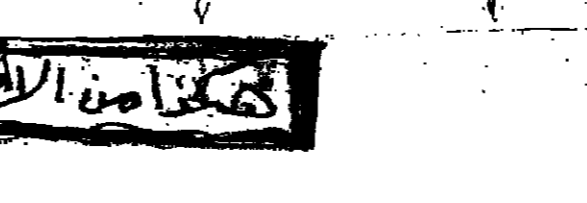
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RACELINE FULL RESULTS SERVICE 0891 1681168. Includes a table of race results for Newcastle, Warwick, Chesham, Windsor, Lingfield, and Irish.

Grand time THE Grand National, March 30, brought forward 45 minutes to 3pm to enable it to be televised fully around the world. The race has an international television audience but TV companies worldwide were faced with a problem because the National falls a week earlier than usual, and outside British Summer Time which begins 2.00am, March 31.

Results SANDOWN. 1.30-1.40: SER LAMBERT, C Meade (11-2), 2.10-2.20: Mearns News (14-1), 3.00-3.10: Curlew Lay (14-1), 4.00-4.10: Strong Deal (14-1), 5.00-5.10: Cheery Crusader (14-1), 6.00-6.10: Vicompt de Valmont (14-1), 7.00-7.10: Tempale (14-1).

Results UTTONGETER. 1.30-1.40: Mearns News (14-1), 2.10-2.20: Curlew Lay (14-1), 3.00-3.10: Strong Deal (14-1), 4.00-4.10: Cheery Crusader (14-1), 5.00-5.10: Vicompt de Valmont (14-1), 6.00-6.10: Tempale (14-1).





Nigel Benn gets to work in the Tenerife gym

The WBC super middleweight champion lets off steam a year after the McClellan fight

Frank Keating in Tenerife

Benn is looking forward in anger

NIGEL BENN, one of the most enduring world champions in British boxing history, will retire before the end of the year. He defends his World Boxing Council super-middleweight title for the 10th time against the South African Thulane Malinga in Newcastle on March 2. After which, he says, he will have "at the most two more fights and then I'll walk away feeling content because all boxing and its shit will have been bashed out of me".

stood so four-square in the ring and shown such valourous stomach for a fight. The public's perception of Benn is of someone who, with a terrifying physical edge, defines both the legalised savagery that prize-fighting's detractors deplore and at the same time the heroic and ultimate chivalry which boxing's supporters espouse in its defence. Next weekend, February 25, is the doom-laden anniversary of Benn's fight with the American Gerald McClellan, and still a mute and paralysed invalid after being carried out on his shield in London. McClellan's tragedy came after, and was caused by, possibly the most breathtaking title-fight ever staged in Britain. It will never be re-shown on television for obvious reasons: "Benn could have been knocked out in the first, pulling himself up rope after rope after being knocked out of the ring. He then ran across to shove his defiance back into an astonished McClellan's face... and so it went on. Now, as is his custom, Benn has left his 18-room, £1 million mansion in suburban Kent to train in the sunshine of Tenerife. After training,



Well in the running... Benn takes to the mountain trail to build up stamina for his next super-middleweight defence on March 2

watched by a packed gymnasium of British title-sharers, he is surprisingly talkative. As he is in the ring, out of it Benn betrays no hint of remorse, let alone compassion: "It is a dangerous, nasty but compelling game." But first things first, he wants to get the British tabloid press off his chest: "I read last week that I'm meant to pay McClellan for what happened. Why me? We were sportsman, boxing. Gerald had got a multi-million-pound managing him, so what's Don King doing about it? Except joining the press to chastise me for not sending any money. Why can't King look after Gerald? I'll help Michael Watson, sure, he's beat me once and I love him to death. "What happened at the end was tragic, of course. I'm the first to know that. But basically the British press hate a winner who's British. They don't like any British man to have balls as big as a cow's, like I have. They don't want winners. Well, I'm not taking any more shit from them. I'm getting out very soon and that will be the end of it. "I also read when the papers come out here that Collins needs to stay in Dub-

lin to fight for some contract reason - so he's mouthing off saying I'm scared to go and fight him there. Come on, Steve, get real - look whose backsides I've been in and still broken them up - Barclay, De Witt, that Italian guy, the lot. I've been into their place and done them over. It's a total joke to say I'm scared of this 'Celtic Warrior'. That's a joke as well, more like a chocolate warrior who melts fast. But if a fight was made

army boxing title from welterweight to heavyweight. But while, say, Linford Christie's tedious bellyache about "no respect" has racial undertones, Benn's xenophobia, while wearing, displays no jot of racism, though heaven knows he says he has suffered it in the British army, especially from Ulster's bigots. He is reckoned to be a millionaire a few times over. "I have always known when I would walk away. I will go this year, that's for certain. After Christmas I will be a businessman, dealing with my brother in property, as well as earning a living as a disc jockey. Someone like Chris Eubank goes out and buys a jacket for £2,000. I'm not like that. I just go up to my room in tatty old jeans and cut and edit my music tapes. "Okay, I've got my mansion, my cars, and no taxman is on my back, so my family won't want for anything. I'm relieved to be going immi-

grating, getting out of that ring. But boxing has almost been bashed out of me and that's how I want it, to go and never return. "You see that Eubank will have to come back as soon as I've gone, his taxman has to be satisfied, doesn't he?" One has a fancy, a hint in the dark, that he might just want for pride's sake, a last equalising fling against the preposterous but talented Eubank. "You must be ruddy joking. I've gone everywhere for my titles, I've nothing to prove against him. He's never had the balls to go anywhere outside England to get anything for himself. Me against Eubank? No way. If he came in here now I'd just throw all my title belts high in the air behind my back and say to him and all the others, 'There you are, you lot go and scrap like dogs for them.' "At training Benn has always been his own man. In his early years he turned down selection for the Commonwealth Games team because he was told he had to attend training camp for sparring. He just did not turn up. He does not spar. "Before the McClellan fight I did spar six or seven rounds. But I don't need that. All I need is for my hands to get the distance, the measurement. I believe in super fitness but not in heavy and that's how I want it, to go and never return. "You see that Eubank will have to come back as soon as I've gone, his taxman has to

a close, good fight last time but mainly because I've had a funny feeling inside me about Malinga's blond South African trainer Nick Durante, who was totally out of order, dishing me rotten at the press conference, and his attitude really made me sick in the stomach. So I'll imagine he's coming out of the corner to fight instead of Malinga. That's been the same all my career - the managers and trainers do all the vile mouthing off, not us boxers." He admits that his relief at retirement is not as strong as those close to him. "If I don't pack in, my girlfriend Caroline will jack me in. After the McClellan thing she nearly did, she just sat crying her eyes out for days asking me to pack it in." He adds that they had to sit their 10-year-old son Dominic down to tell him real boxing was more serious than Sky TV's WWF wrestling, in which nobody gets hurt - and now he too does not want daddy to fight any more. "Funny, he did once watch a Eubank fight on TV and he seemed to enjoy that but, with Eubank, it was all pretty harmless. And, no, I didn't tell him, 'Hey, that's the man who once beat up your dad.'"

'If I don't pack it in my girlfriend will jack me in. After the McClellan thing she nearly did'

with Steve it will probably be my last, unless Jones wants a go. I want my last fight to be in front of my own people. They'll have to come to England if they want to get me." His "English and proud of it" mantra does go on. He served five years, in Ulster and Germany, with the Royal Fusiliers (winning every

Rugby League

Crisis club purge

John Huxley
SPECULATION over the short-term survival of Dewsbury has overshadowed the first Division club's attempt to reach the quarter-finals of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup by beating Widnes tomorrow. It was disclosed yesterday that the Rugby Football League's chief executive Maurice Lindsay had ordered the mass resignation of the club's management because of £390,000 debts and continuing losses of £1,000 a day. A West Yorkshire newspaper reported that Lindsay had told club officials that Dewsbury were "the worst managed club I have ever known". Now a two-man financial management team has been put in control at New Crown Flatt and they are expected to meet the club's creditors next week in an attempt to negotiate a survival scheme. Dewsbury's chief executive and chairman Ken Davies said he was "treated like a naughty schoolboy" and that he felt Dewsbury had been badly treated for being a members club. Dewsbury, who beat the Premier League's London Broncos in the previous round, are expected to be unchanged against Widnes with the exception of their full-back Pierre van Wyk, who is returning to South Africa. Widnes, who surprisingly beat Workington Town away from home, have agreed an unusual pay structure with their players to cover both ties. The coach Doug Laughton explained: "If we had lost at Workington the players would have received nothing and defeat at Dewsbury could see them pick up just £50 for all their work." He said, however, the players stand to pick up a four-figure fee. Sheffield Eagles will try to reach the last eight for the first time. They go to Halifax with both their corner-half Mark Aston and forward Anthony Farrell back in the team after almost two months out with injury. The back-row forward Paul Dixon will undergo a late fitness test on his hip injury. Halifax's coach Steve Simons is still without Paul Moriarty, Wayne Jackson and Craig Dean with injury; but his team are still certain to start as favourites.

Warwick runners and riders

Table with horse racing results for Warwick. Includes columns for race number, horse name, jockey, and time. Races include 1.40 Teano Gold, 2.10 Marjorie Society, 3.15 Jack Tanner, 3.50 River Louise, 4.25 Beach Road, 4.55 Ropstone, 1.40 JANUARY HANDICAP HURDLE, 2.10 STUBBLE HANDICAP HURDLE, 2.10 STUBBLE HANDICAP HURDLE, 2.10 STUBBLE HANDICAP HURDLE.

Windsor programme

Table with horse racing results for Windsor. Includes columns for race number, horse name, jockey, and time. Races include 1.50 Keep It Zipped, 2.55 Pango Waring, 3.55 Doyler, 3.55 Light Light, 4.00 Ask The Governor, 4.00 Incognito, 4.00 Doyler, 4.00 Doyler.

Lingfield all-weather flat card

Table with horse racing results for Lingfield. Includes columns for race number, horse name, jockey, and time. Races include 2.50 Dancin' Simon, 3.50 Amethyst, 3.50 Amethyst, 4.00 Mica Casuar, 2.50 Dancin' Simon, 3.50 Amethyst, 3.50 Amethyst, 4.00 Mica Casuar.

The following two horses are doubly engaged today. Their first preference is in bold type. Easy Joker 3.00 Newcastle and 4.25 Warwick. Taramoss 4.10 Newcastle and 3.30 Chesham.

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FA CUP SOCCER

David Lacey reports on tomorrow's derby game when the old rivals City and United meet for only the fifth time in the Cup

The day that divides Manchester

NOT a lot of people will know that in 1891 Ardwick visited Newton Heath in the first qualifying round of the FA Cup and lost 5-1.

The statistic only achieves some distant relevance this weekend because tomorrow their descendants, the Manchester City and United, meet at Old Trafford in the fifth round.

At least, for Maine Road supporters, the scoreline will ring a more recent bell, for that was City's winning margin the last time they beat their neighbourhood rivals in any competition.

Manchester United lost 5-1 in Moss Side on September 23, 1898, their only defeat in 15 derby games under Alex Ferguson and a day kept holy by City fans ever since.

Should Manchester City knock United out of the Cup tomorrow, however, Maine Road will no longer have to live on its memories.

Such an outcome is unlikely. City have not won at Old Trafford since 1974, when Denis Law's backheader sent United down to the old Second Division and prompted a pitch invasion.

The match was abandoned eight minutes early, but the result stood. Similar scenes of disorder are highly unlikely tomorrow. Indeed, when United beat City 1-0 at Old Trafford in a poor Premiership game last October the mood was decidedly downbeat.

Even Alan Ball, the City manager, was unusually subdued afterwards. "At least we weren't outplayed," he observed glumly.

They ought not to be outplayed tomorrow and in fact have rather more to offer in attack than was the case four months ago, when their visit to Old Trafford coincided with a barren spell which saw only three goals scored in the first 11 Premiership fixtures.

Since then, inspired by the Georgian Georgi Kinkiadze, City have failed to find the net in just five matches in the FA Cup tie was against City in 1987.

PROBABLE TEAMS: Manchester United: Schuster, Irwin, Bruce, Pallister, P. Neville, Giggs, Butt, Beane, Sharpe, Cantona, Cole. Manchester City: Ferguson, Curle, Symons, Frontczek, Summerbee, Lomas, Kinkiadze, Brown, Clough, Rösler, Quinn.

time that the Manchester teams have met in the FA Cup, and the record stands at two knockouts apiece.

"I think if we can defend well then we're capable of scoring," said Clough yesterday, keeping faith with his father's clean-sheet philosophy. But Ball has Keith Curle and Robbie Brightwell looking doubtful, and Gary Flitcroft, an emergency centre-back in Wednesday's replay against Coventry City, suspended.

Ball, moreover, is unable to bring Alan Kernaghan, his Republic of Ireland defender, back from Bradford because players on loan cannot be recalled during the first month. However, Michael Frontczek, Manchester City's former Borussia Mönchengladbach defender, is available and the extra day will give Curle and Brightwell more chance to recover from, respectively, a bruised shin and a calf strain.

Alex Ferguson also has uncertainties in defence but for the Manchester United manager it is more a matter of choice than crisis. Ferguson must decide whether to recall his captain, Steve Bruce, who missed last Saturday's 1-0 victory over Blackburn having had 14 stitches inserted in a gashed forehead sustained at Wimbledon the previous weekend.

With Gary Neville still suspended, Ferguson has the option of retaining David May at centre-back alongside the newly recovered Gary Pallister, a combination that subdued Alan Shearer and could be relied upon to not allow Niall Quinn and Uwe Rösler much leeway tomorrow.

Nicky Butt is back in the United squad after suspension. It will be surprising if he is not recalled as Ferguson seeks to offset United's increasingly forlorn pursuit of Newcastle in the Premiership with the growing prospect of a third successive appearance in the FA Cup final, and their 10th in all.

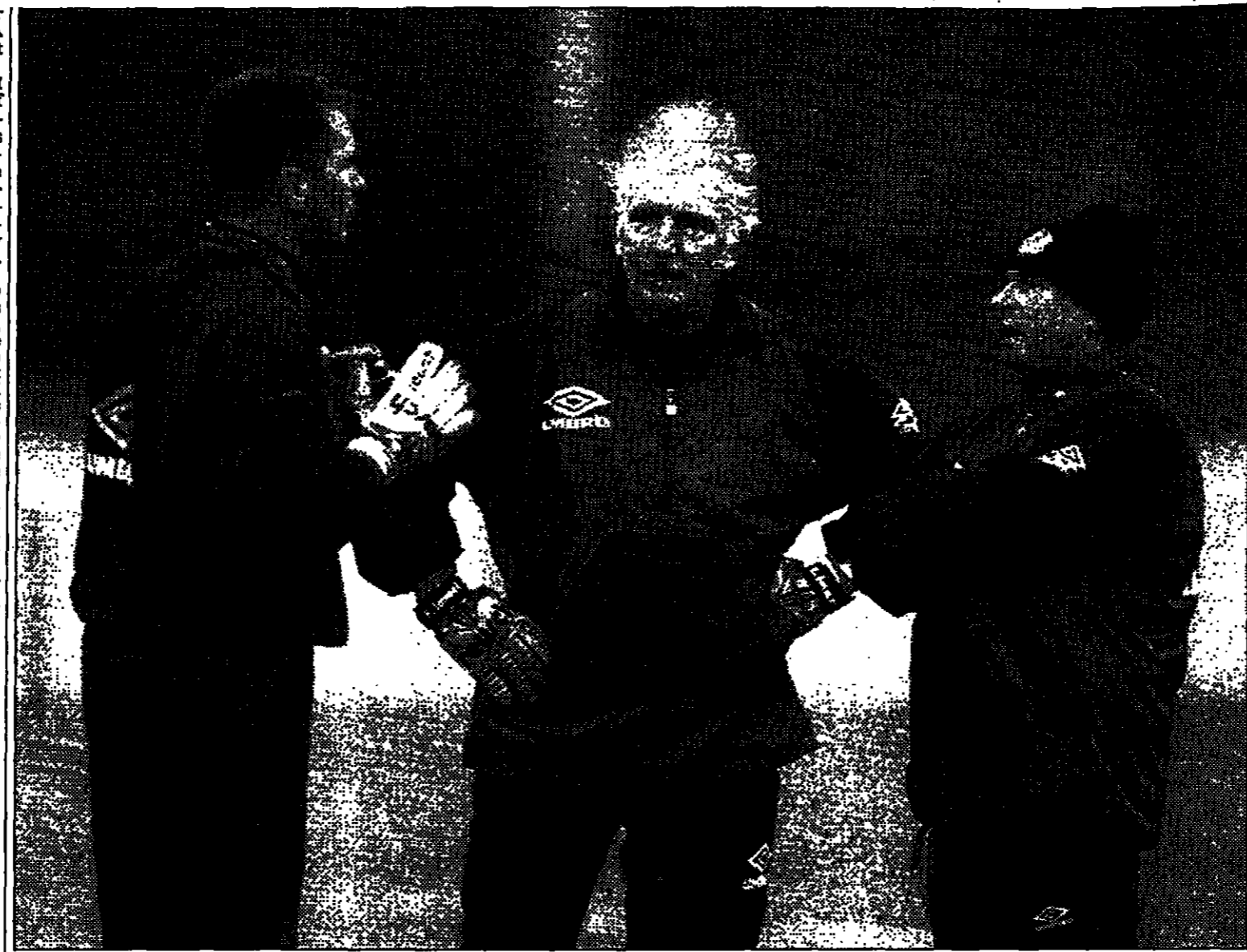
"Most of my players have been in big games situations like this, although none have played in a derby cup-tie," said Ferguson. "I am the only one who has been involved in that sort of thing - my first FA Cup tie was against City in 1987."

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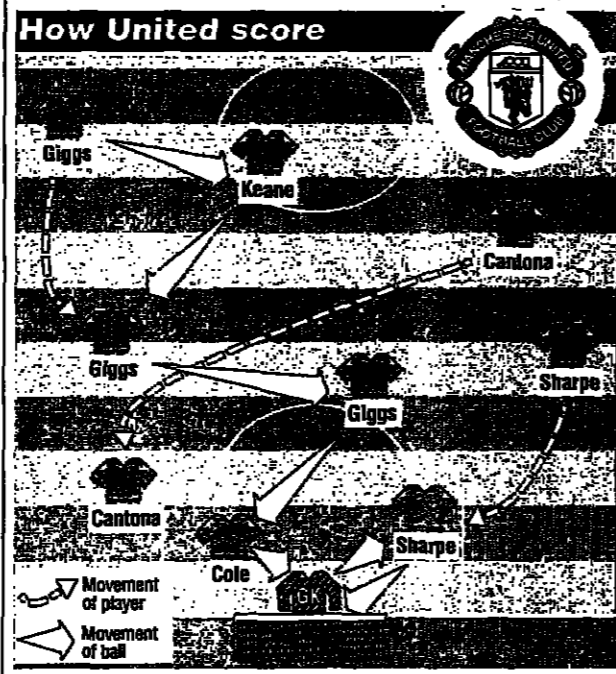
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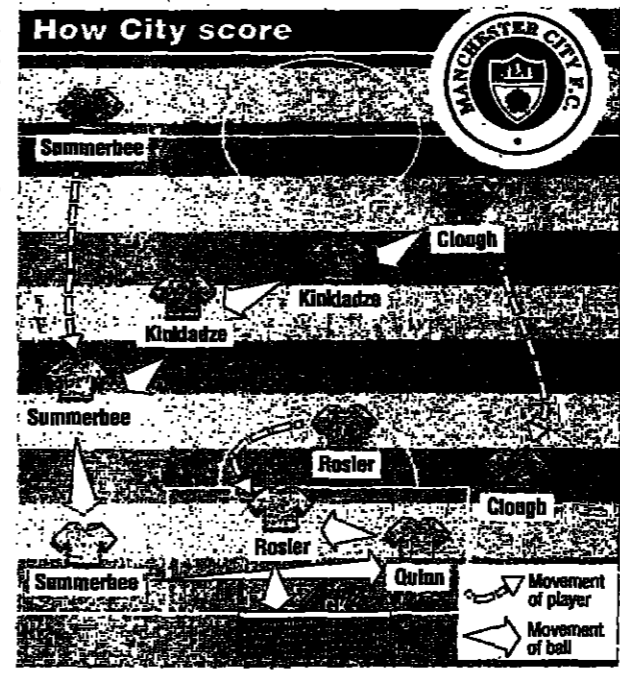
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Old hands... Alec Stepany, City's goalkeeping coach, helps Alan Ball and Mike Immel plot his old club United's downfall



MANCHESTER United will be looking to score the sort of goal which uses Cantona as a foil for the ebullient form Giggs is displaying. Giggs accepts a return pass from Keane and cuts across from the right, as Cantona's run on the opposite diagonal drags defenders with him. Giggs slips the ball to Cole, whose shot is blocked by the goalkeeper only for Sharpe, following up on the left, to score from the rebound.



Performance of the week: Jon McCarthy (Port Vale) who knocked Everton out of the FA Cup with the winning goal on Wednesday.

A N Other

SPURS were once manufactured by this Scot's name-sakes. He won his in rather more spectacular fashion by testing the net-maker's art. His career spanned nearly a quarter of a century, almost all of it albino including a time spent in a distant blizzard. There was also a brief shambles in between.

Last week: Jimmy Gabriel (Everton, Southampton, Bournemouth, Swindon, Brentford).

'Awesome' Villa and free-scoring Yorke bar the path for Burley's Ipswich hopefuls

AFTER overcoming Alan Shearer, Blackburn and the FA Cup odds Ipswich should fear no reputations at the fifth-round stage, writes Russell Thomas.

Portman Road today as "an awesome proposition" and that is hardly Cup kidology from the East Anglian club's 1978 Wembley winner.

Paul Allen, 33 and a Cup winner 16 years ago, will relish renewed opportunity with Swindon against the club who released him in October after an unhappy spell. But his manager McMahon and Southampton's captain

Skiing

El Toro puts the wind up downhillers

THE downhill weekend at any World Championships is never without drama but the mountains of southern Spain could have seen without the teasing and taunting of the weather yesterday.

Twenty centimetres of new snow from the rising El Toro wind out of Africa, followed by poor visibility, has badly disrupted the men's event. The competitors have not skied one full training run, the minimum requirement according to rules. Reconnaissance in warm-up suits has been the only option.

The artillery was boosted to 200 this time but its barrage was mainly an underpinning. Natural snow above 6,000 feet is plentiful.

The son of an Arlberg tunnel worker, who died prematurely of emphysema, he dared to suggest racing would one day be a sport for the many, not an amateur elite. He was right. In 1985 Franz Klammer retired on about \$15,000 a year from the Austrian Ski Federation.

The Garmisch World Cup organisers immediately raised stake money by 40 per cent to 100,000 marks (\$62,000), an indication of how nervously reactive the FIS's Cup circuit has become. The official body still holds the high trump cards. Professional tours in the US have flourished because the same old faces kept winning, and only the national bodies are able to provide attractive new faces.

Hockey

Germans threaten Hightown

HIGHTOWN made sure of a place for England in the semi-finals of the European Women's Indoor Championships by winning their first two matches. They beat Edinburgh Ladies 9-3 and the Austrian debutantes Econsult 5-1 in Bratislava.

Sports Betting

Cricket's big hits

CRICKET's World Cup has already attracted some huge gambles. Surrey Racing has taken a bet of \$820,000 (£10,000) on Australia at 4-1 and one Sporting Index client has staked a staggering \$826 on every run in the tournament above 15,250.

England would be great each-way value at 12-1 if their key players could be trusted to stay fit. Already Hick, Cook, Gough and Smith are in a delicate state and Stewart has not broken his finger yet. Hold fire for now and turn to the individual markets.

Street fighting qualities give her the edge in the combined event

DICABO STREET, the United States' World Cup downhill champion, bravely won the downhill half of the women's combined event in Sierra Nevada yesterday, writes John Samuel.

The 24-year-old from Sun Valley, Idaho, who had racked off five victories in succession on the way to that World Cup title, triumphed on the 3,084-metre course despite picking up an injury just before the start.

While carrying her race skis down 18 inches of new snow Street fell awkwardly, briefly knocking herself out, and strained a hamstring muscle that had to be taped minutes before her run.

It beat the Italian super-giant slalom champion Isolde Kostner into second place by 20 hundredths of a second and Katja Selzinger, the German who narrowly beat her to the 1994 Olympic downhill gold, by a further one hundredth.

to see the smaller, technically more able skiers with satisfactory downhill results take the medals. Candidates on that score are the twelfth-placed Austrian Anita Wachter, the Swiss Heidi Zurbriggen, currently lying 16th, and Pernilla Wiberg, the Swedish Olympic champion, who is in 19th.

Vertical text on the right edge of the page, including 'SOCCER', 'copy', 'ton', 'ding', 'again', 'of', 'ine', 'ad', 'moil', and 'must e'.

SportsGuardian

SOUTH AFRICA SHOW ENGLAND THE WAY FORWARD

Kirsten strikes Cup record

SOUTH Africa's Gary Kirsten provided England with a few pointers on how to deal with the United Arab Emirates when he struck them for a World Cup record 188 not out yesterday.

Kirsten's innings in Rawalpindi beat Viv Richards's 1988 mark by seven runs but was one short of the West Indian's world record for a one-day international, set 12 years ago against England at Old Trafford.

Kirsten was named Man of the Match for his prominent role in South Africa's 321 for two off 50 overs — their highest score in a limited-overs international. The UAE reached 152 for eight, leaving South Africa victors by 169 runs.

Kirsten said he was unaware of the record until he neared the target. "I wasn't sure at all until I was on 175 when Daryll [Cullinan] spoke to the umpire, who told him the World Cup record was 181," Kirsten said. "It's a great feeling. Hopefully I can keep it up for the rest of the series."

England face the UAE in Feshawar tomorrow.

More cricket, page 8



Up and under... the UAE's keeper Imtiaz Khan Abassi can only look on as Gary Kirsten strikes another six yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM CHADWICK

When hate comes to billiard balls



David Lacey

AT THE start of the season a new manager met the board and set out his plans. The board nodded and wished him well. The manager then suggested that they should all join him in prayer.

As he is still in his job it would seem faith can move football directors as well as mountains. In fact, given the recent experiences of a number of his contemporaries, a regular plea for deliverance from evil would not go amiss at the start of every manager's working day.

Consider the case of Jimmy Mullin, who had been four years and four months in charge at Burnley but left Turf Moor this week after supporters accused him at a local take-away and were so violently abusive it was alleged that one fan tried to set light to Mr Mullin's dress.

Or Ian Bremner, the long-suffering manager of longer-suffering Fulham, re-living the painful experience to which he was subjected at Southampton, with leaflets containing death threats circulated at Craven Cottage.

Chanting "Bramfoot Out" or "Sack Mullin" is one thing, but these incidents are part of the mounting hysteria taking hold of football and posing a more sinister threat than even the worst days of hooliganism in the Seventies and Eighties.

Managers are not angels, although neither of the aforementioned belongs to the plate-throwing tendency. On occasions their inability to turn around the fortunes of losing teams demands a change. But the sort of personal vilification to which a growing number are being subjected is worrying.

When Jack Mansell managed Reading in the early Seventies the team slipped into a losing run and supporters registered tied rude messages to his son's bicycle. At the time this appeared to be

taking things too far; now a manager would be grateful if fans merely left their feelings on the handlebars.

As manager of Leeds United Howard Wilkinson sat on the bench at St Andrew's last Sunday and saw several of his players threatened, verbally and physically, by Birmingham supporters who had dashed down gangways to the touchline. As chairman of the Football Managers' Association Wilkinson believes the present levels of abuse suffered by players and managers are part of a worrying pattern.

At the moment there is an atmosphere of hysteria surrounding the game which is fanned by some newspapers, radio stations and television channels," he said. "The premise is that everybody has to win. Losing is a disgrace to one's manhood."

"Our sport is being prostituted and we're losing control. On the one side the motive seems to be one of profit. On the other there seems to be a need for violence. And football managers are soft targets."

"They are soft targets for both supporters and directors, in fact. For when the fans begin to shout, sacking the manager becomes the boardroom's easy option. Memories must be short at Tranmere if the local anglers are calling for the dismissal of John King."

THESSE days the players are usually the calmest folk around. On Sunday Wilkinson's team, and in particular Gary McAllister and Gary Kelly, suffered more prolonged and, considering what was being thrown at them, potentially harmful abuse than that which led to Eric Cantona attacking a Crystal Palace supporter. Yet they managed to shrug it aside.

In the long term all this hate can only sour the game. "Players are developing an extremely cynical attitude to it all," said Wilkinson, "and eventually player-manager relationships will suffer."

It is to be hoped that like the worst excesses of the terrace hooligan this is just another passing unpleasantness.

After Preston had won 5-1 at Aston Villa in 1985 the winning team were attacked by the home fans. "Thicker and faster came the stones," said one eye-witness. "Showers of spittle covered us."

No smooker balls, though.

Racing hit by sponsor body blow

Grunwick veteran takes on the establishment by moving his money into soccer

Graham Rick

HORSE racing, already reeling from high costs, low prize-money and the effects of the lottery, suffered another huge blow yesterday when the sport's biggest sponsor said he was switching his money to football.

George Ward, who personally puts £800,000 a year into racing and is president of the Horseracing Spenders' Association, is threatening to pull out of jumping's second most important event, the

King George VI Chase, which is held every Boxing Day at Kempton. Winners have included Arkle and Desert Orchid (four times).

Ward is not frightened of a battle. Eighteen years ago he routed the picket lines at his Grunwick photographic reproduction company and yesterday he confirmed that he will withdraw his companies' support from racing unless the sport's authority gives sponsors a better deal.

Last month he cancelled support for a race at Redcar and for a series of races for inexperienced jump horses.

Yesterday he added two more events to the list, both Classic trials at the Kempton Easter meeting, and others are likely to follow.

He has used the money saved to buy advertising boards in prime positions at Premier League football grounds. "My companies are not reducing their sponsorship," Ward said, "but they are redirecting it. The support we are now giving to football will put our companies' names in front of 60 million viewers over 13 weeks."

Exclusivity is at the core of the dispute. Ward's companies, Bonusprint and Tripleprint, contributed prize-money to dozens of races last year.

Since March 1983 racehorse owners have been granted exemption from VAT if they were able to show that their horseracing interests were being pursued as a business. Selling space on jockeys' silks is accepted as proof of this by Customs and Excise, which is why the British Horseracing Board set up such a scheme in June 1984. However, the selective eye of the television camera often gives logos on jockeys more prominence than sponsors' advertising, which

is why Ward asked for the scheme to be reviewed.

Ward suggested an alternative by which a sponsor giving £10,000 or more to a race would enjoy exclusivity. In exchange he would agree to distribute among owners of runners in the race £1,000 or five per cent of the prize-money, whichever was the greater. "It would give owners another £500,000 a year, spread the money more evenly and between a far greater number of owners," said Ward, who has nine horses in training.

"This contentious aspect of the Sponsorship For Racing Owners policy makes our position as race sponsors not

only untenable but also commercially unsound."

Friction between the two camps reached smoking point at a public forum at Newbury last Friday when Ward and the board's marketing director Lee Richardson were involved in a shouting match.

"They want our money, yet they treat us autocritically," said Ward yesterday. "The racing industry is worth billions of pounds, but it is not run professionally. Take it or leave it is their attitude."

Paul Greaves of the BHB said that Ward's decision was regrettable. "We hope, even at this late stage, that George Ward will think again."

Lydon to coach union's North

Robert Armstrong

THE legendary Joe Lydon will make rugby union history by turning out at Sale on Monday evening to coach the North Division squad.

Lydon, the former Wigan and Great Britain full-back who is now a professional rugby league coach with the champions, has accepted an invitation from the North manager Fran Cotton to take charge of a specialist training session. Lydon will be accompanied by Ray Unsworth, the Wigan Academy coach.

Cotton, a member of England's 1980 Grand Slam side, wants the Wigan men to give the North players technical advice rather than just put them through training drills.

Paul Sampson, the 18-year-old Bradford schoolboy called up for the England squad recently, will be among the players to benefit from Lydon's coaching.

Cotton, one of union's more advanced thinkers, has also recruited Andy Clark, an expert in power training and fitness, who has worked with players from Wigan, Liverpool FC and Manchester United.

"Wigan's record is second to none and I'm sure Joe and Ray can help us," said Cotton yesterday. "I am pleased with the way the North developed this season but I want us to maintain the momentum and explore every area we can to improve our game."

"Apart from the way in which primary possession is obtained I think the two sports have more in common now than ever before."

"Since Wigan seem to have managed to overcome the problems better than anyone, it seemed sense to approach their coaching people for a few tips. Our lads will benefit from looking at their methods and listening to them."

"Breaking down defences at the highest level these days is very difficult. Even when you set out to play a game which involves everyone in the side and uses all the pitch creating openings against well-organised teams it gets harder."

Lydon's call-up will not be the first contact between union and league at coaching level. England's management has attended presentations by the Leeds rugby league youth development officer Damian McCraith and listened to advice from their coach Dean Bell.

FA to double drug tests of players

THE Football Association is to double the number of drug tests it carries out next season in an attempt to clamp down further on abuse in the game, writes Martin Thorpe.

Last season there were 272 tests, four times the previous season. This season there will be 280 and next season 500.

The recent cases of Roger Stanislaus and Craig Whittington have highlighted the continuing problem but there is more general concern about the growing use of drugs in society spreading to football.

The FA, PFA and Sports Council provisionally agreed the increase yesterday, pending final approval from the council, who will carry out the tests.

The majority of these will be done in training, others after games. Each of the 92 clubs will get at least one visit, others three or more.

"We recognise there is a drugs problem in society," said the FA's chief executive Graham Kelly, "and we are determined to stop it spreading into the game."

There will also be a survey of young players' attitudes to drugs and the prevalence of drugs in football.

Guardian COLLINS Crossword 20,578

A copy of the Collins English Dictionary will be sent to the first five correct entries drawn. Entries to Guardian Crossword No 20,578, Reference Marketing, Harper Collins Publishing, 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, London, W6 8JF, by first post on Friday. Solution and winners in the Guardian on Monday February 26.

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Address: _____

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- Set by Araucaria**
- Across**
- 8 Sweeper holds everything for 22 across (8)
 - 9,25 Summit approaching the infinite, on English soil? (5,5)
 - 10,24 Entertaining person takes wrong view in currency (4,4)
 - 11 26-12 25, 2 15, 9 10: British fish in cabbage (6,4)
 - 12 See 26
 - 14 Objective, to be removed to a solitary house? (6)
 - 15 14 feet from a left turn, possibly? (7)
 - 17 Wax it enthusiastically? (7)
- Down**
- 1 Turner skilled with crystal ball? (5,3)
 - 2 Depressed? Spend! (4)
 - 3 Doctors are intimidating to capital? (6)
 - 4 I get election winner, with deposit, to yield to outside pressure? (7)

COLLINS ENGLISH DICTIONARY

5 Revised by Plutarch, losing companion all of a sudden? (8)

6 Amalgam: one part tin, one part nitrogen, three parts carbon monoxide (10)

7 Old-fashioned gesture revealing the anxious (2,4)

13 Eccentric character prefacing a communication or two (6-4)

16 An old note by a small boy with absolute power (8)

18 Bombast from Welsh or Scottish mouth is uncharacteristic (8)

19 "Silver in Respite", work of Van Meegeren or Keating? (7)

21 Speculation about everything for 22 across (6)

22 Left first of chairs in two-piece sunset (8)

24 Decline of article in the Guardian? (4)

CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,577

Founders.
Worth going the extra mile for.



USHERS FOUNDERS ALE

Don't imagine for a second that it won't happen here. A press conference will be hastily called. A tearful high-profile British hero, head bowed, voice sombre, will read a short statement. He will tell 30 or 40 journalists and a bank of cameras and microphones that he is HIV positive.

John Duncan

Outlook page 15

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SCOTT: THE AFTER
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The Guardian Outlook

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SCOTT: THE AFTERMATH
The ministers involved may have escaped censure but Sir Richard's report, says HUGO YOUNG, lays bare their world without shame

Heavily armed against the truth

THE emblematic character in the saga of the Scott Inquiry is not William Waldegrave and Geoffrey Howe. Sir Richard Scott had hardly begun his work before Lord Howe took it on himself to be the scourge and defamer of his work: prosecutor, judge and jury in the attack on what he was about to publish — a traducer of his very existence. Howe's contention was partly that Scott's procedure was unfair, and his inquiry "not a tribunal upon whose judgment the reputation of anyone should be allowed to depend". This perilous exaggeration did not deter the former foreign secretary yesterday from declaring that the report had vindicated ministers and government in all particulars. But it wasn't, in any case, the essence of his outrage. This was, rather, the "gap of non-comprehension" existing between Scott's world and "the real world", which rendered the judge incapable of engaging with what ministers had to do. Howe offered this scathing opinion as an elder statesman, as if he were now above the battle which Scott so woefully failed to understand. But he was nothing of the sort. Reading the report, one is reminded not only that he, as Waldegrave's superior, presided over every subtlety by which Middle East arms sales were kept from public view, but that he exalts everything Scott, in his plump and half-mystified way, criticises about Whitehall life: its secrecy, its duplicities, its morass of unaccountable networks, its swift capacity to rationalise the misleading of Parliament as *raison d'état*. The ministers involved in arms sales to Iraq have escaped any censure they're

prepared to regard as such. They're satisfied that the sincerity of their errors protects them from any blame. In fact, they think they're heroes. Howe told Scott that the guidelines restraining arms sales to Iraq and Iran amounted, in contrast with the policies of other countries, to "a huge national sacrifice". Along with trying to put Robin Cook in the dock, this was also the distraction Ian Lang piously deployed on Thursday. For in the world of Geoffrey Howe, not only do the ministers in this saga have nothing to be ashamed of, there isn't even a marginal case to answer. The national interest demands the sale of arms, lethal or non-lethal according to time and place. The rules are debated between honourable men, with conclusions, however, that must inevitably be kept quiet and, if exposed, must be justified by the kind of casuistry which, in Howe's world, is second nature, but which, if admitted to Scott's world, requires to be taken apart. It is, above all, the act of taking apart that Howe resents as a grotesque intrusion on the public interest. Reading the Scott Report, one can see why. It takes apart his world as never before. Consider the single question of the guidelines. The question was did Waldegrave knowingly deceive Parliament? Answer: No. He was not, says Scott, "duplicious". Therefore he claims innocence. He says he sincerely didn't believe the guidelines had been changed. Yet behind this simple verdict lies a vast accumulation of evidence that they had changed, that officials and ministers thought they had changed, that ministers were aware how intensely embarrassing this might be, that "the convenience of secrecy" — phrase Scott prof-

ferred to Sir Robin Butler, the essence of which the Cabinet Secretary did not reject — prevailed whenever necessary. The original guidelines, first of all, were not published. Howe, who framed them in 1984, thought they "should be allowed to filter out". It was 10 months before they became fully known. During the Iran-Iraq war, the restraints they were supposed to impose on lethal weaponry were even-handed but liberally interpreted — with full awareness, however, of how scandal might beckon. Of Matrix-Churchill machine tools, for example, one of Howe's officials wrote in January 1988: "If it becomes public knowledge that the tools are to be used to make munitions, deliveries would have to stop at once." That the position altered when the war ended is attested to, Scott reports, in numerous ways. Alan Clark, Chan-noon's junior, ecstatically noted the "brilliant" drafting that had exchanged a tight policy for a looser one — "so obviously drafted with the object of flexibility in either direction". But we don't need to rely only on fringe players. Waldegrave and Howe both made

things very clear. In September 1988, Howe remarked that "it could look very cynical" if, shortly after he had condemned Iraq for using chemical warfare against Kurds, "we adopt a more flexible approach to arms sales". He wanted to encourage these. His officials should "get moving down that path". Asked by Scott to examine more closely why secrecy about the new policy must obtain, Howe alluded with a palpable shudder to "the emotional way in which such debates are conducted in public". This was not a foreign secretary talking about a policy that did not change. Nor, obviously, was Waldegrave when his office wrote in February 1989 that he was "content for us to implement a more liberal policy on defence sales without any public announcement". The civil servants who also knew this, scented on it and conspired to keep it quiet, litter the pages of Scott. Like the ministers, they became masters, at least in retrospect, of the linguistic trickery necessary to escape confessing that the policy had changed. Instead, the guidelines had been "re-formulated" (Gore-Booth of the FO), "amended" (Goulden of the FO), were "a form of interpre-

tation" (Barrett of the MoD), subject to "flexibility" (ministers and officials possess). Asked why this flexibility itself could not have been admitted in simple terms, rather than concealed behind a succession of studiously misleading parliamentary answers, Waldegrave and Howe each supplied explanations that conceded with utter starkness the priorities which they, in their heroic conduct of the public business, invite us to excuse. "Because it was judged that there were overriding reasons other minister who sees through one lens his own innocence, and through the other the naivety of Lord Justice Scott. It is not exactly an amoral world. It merely gives dissembling a higher priority than other worlds. But it countenances apologies which, I submit, would be intolerable in any other field of human conduct, culminating with the decisive *aperçu*, hitherto undiscovered even by Sir Humphrey, that whatever new guidelines were manifestly being followed, policy hadn't changed because ministers said they hadn't changed it. In the world of Sir Richard Scott, even after three years' exposure, it proved impossible to accommodate such linguistic relativism. In giving his account, Scott is not his own best ally. The report is absurdly long. Gigantism takes over his lordship, as he journeys down every meandering and sometimes futile side-path of the arms export world, the licensing and consentment thereof, the 1989 statute that still governs it etc etc. The limitless verbosity of the High Court bench, so ready to reach for double negatives where none would do much better, is rotundly on display. But in most ways, the judge lives up to Howe's worst ex-

pectations. More than anyone could see in the first few hours before yesterday's papers went to bed, he exposes and denounces the world Howe speaks for. It is true, for example, that he acquits Waldegrave of knowingly misleading the Commons. The minister had no "duplicious intention". On the other hand, his conduct and that of Howe and every other minister had duplicity about it. What remained "duplicious", he writes, was the "nature of the flexibility claimed for the guidelines". In any other context than one in which ministers were expected to be hung, drawn and quartered, such a verdict would have been worth a resignation. "The paucity of linguistic game-playing, moreover, may satisfy the world of Howe. The armies of Whitehall have rewritten the grammar of honest accountability. But the judge is not impressed. The contention that the guidelines were not changed, he said in a paragraph that somehow escaped Lang's attention, "is so plainly inapposite as to be incapable of being sustained by serious argument". He saw what was up. The change was kept secret for a very old-fashioned reason, which he understands. "It might legitimately have been feared that public knowledge of an intended relaxation of restrictions on the supply of defence equipment to Iraq

would provoke such indignation in the media and among vociferous sections of the British public as to be politically damaging. What Scott won't accept is that commercial interests should override all other considerations. He calls public disclosure a "constitutional" question, which should have been weighted better in the balance against political advantage and the intricacies of Middle East trade politics, real or imagined. His verdict on the world Howe defends is extraordinarily harsh. For six years, he finds, the Government consistently undervalued the public interest in Parliament being kept informed. "Time and time again", ministers came down against full disclosure for no better reason than that this would be politically inconvenient. Will the Scott Report redefine Howe's "real world"? In one sense, the real world seems to be winning. Nobody is planning to resign. The linguistic conjurors think they've taken the big tricks. Besides, the judge did a lot to help them. His procedures, far from being unfair, went overboard to help the men in the dock. No fraudster is given the opportunity ministers have had to scrutinise the judgment and propose amendments to the counts against them. Scott surrendered another point. On the last page of the report, he is meditating on questions of responsibility as against accountability. Should ministers be required to accept personal criticism for what goes wrong in their department? In the arms-to-Iraq affair, actually, ministers did a lot of the dirty work themselves. So the question is a trifle academic. The Scott doctrine, gratuitously, follows that of the high priest of the real world, Sir Robin Butler. He said government was now so complex that ministers shouldn't be obliged to take the blame, and the judge produces an acquiescent double negative: "For my part, I find it difficult to disagree." The systemic indictment, however, stands. Ministers, clearly, intend to pay little attention. Having got the exoneration they wanted, they've made a few patronising references to Sir Richard's recommendations on export licensing. For the rest, they have no shame. Their world is Howe's world, and the only reason this opportunity arose to expose it was a misbegotten prosecution of Matrix-Churchill executives that went wrong. So the question is: would anyone else be different? The Labour Party has been in opposition so long it has forgotten what power is like. Its indignation at the dishonesty and parliamentary deception has the innocence of politicians who have seldom had to make hard decisions. It is committed to a Freedom of Information Act, but that hardly touches the point of commercial secrecy or the temptation to keep Parliament half-informed. Although led by Tony Blair, this was the party of Jim Callaghan and Harold Wilson when it last mattered. The only weapon against such expectations is that the world of Richard Scott should capture the public mind as being ineffably superior to that of Geoffrey Howe. The ministers survive, to continue their heroic obfuscations. The judge, in his innocence, argues for something better. So should all who believe that these ministers, when put to the test, were serial defaulter against the truth.



Illustration by
ANDRZEJ KRAUZE

It is not exactly an amoral world. It merely gives dissembling a higher priority than other worlds

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A tremendous read... This Winton...
ICADOR

Three men in the same boat

TWO men were in the dock yesterday when there should have been three. Twenty-four hours on from Scott Day One it was inevitable that the highly selective quotes, which ministers had mined from Sir Richard's damning report to protect their most vulnerable members, would begin to look threadbare. Both William Waldegrave and Sir Nicholas Lyell, who with good reason were highly unconvincing in defending themselves on Day One, looked even more vulnerable last night. In a rare act of unity, Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs held a joint press conference yesterday referring to a "parliamentary crisis" which could only be cleared by ministerial resignations. Missing from the frame was the third man, not for what he did during the arms-to-Iraq scandal but for the distortions of Sir Richard's report which he allowed government departments to publish on Thursday: Sir Robin Butler, cabinet secretary and head of the home civil service.

Once upon a time senior Whitehall press officers had sufficient clout to intercede and require a government minister

to redraft statements or press releases which contained inaccuracies or exaggerated claims. Now it seems even the cabinet secretary is powerless to intervene when desperate ministers produce — and release under departmental imprimatur — totally distorted summaries of a crucial official inquiry. The government's press pack released with the report contained 13 separate releases from government departments each filled with fibs, fabrication, falsehoods and just plain lies. Even Sir Robin's own esteemed office at the heart of the Whitehall machine indulges in the tacky business. One press release from the Cabinet Office on control of exports to Iran and Iraq baldly states: "There was no change of policy in 1989," whereas the Scott report unequivocally declares: "It is clear that policy on defence sales to Iraq did not remain unchanged." Understandably, Opposition spokesmen yesterday concentrated their fire on the mendacity of ministers, but in the full-blown debate on Scott on Monday week they also need to address the role of Sir Robin. If trust in government is to be restored, then as very first step the civil service machine must be able to stop ministerial fabrication. Perhaps the biggest irony of the week is a 65-page press pack, designed to prove the purity of political conduct which has only confirmed the readiness of ministers to deceive and mislead.

Reforming Whitehall is the most important political challenge. It requires both a Freedom of Information Act to end the secrecy that spawns so much duplicity and deceit; and new statutory protection for civil servants blowing the

whistle on ministerial misconduct. But the most immediate issue raised yesterday is the political future of Waldegrave and Lyell. Should they resign?

Both men, pleading guilty to the incompetence exposed by Scott, claim intent to deceive; the other he did not intend to send three men to prison without due process. Yet, as Scott demonstrates, Waldegrave is guilty of "deliberate" deception of Parliament and Lyell's advice to ministers would have put three men behind bars but for the intervention of a robust trial judge. Day Two was the turn of the opposition parties to produce a catalogue of quotes damning ministers. They had the easier task. The report is stacked with them: Waldegrave is found in breach of Major's own cabinet rules; wrong in denying the arms policy had remained unchanged; at fault for misleading the public; and MPs Lyell's indictment is even longer: at fault for failing to pass on Heseltine's concerns to the trial judge; unsound in the legal advice he gave to ministers; wrong in failing to read key letters and documents; wrong in his decision to extend gagging orders to whole categories of government documents; and perhaps most damning of all, bears "major responsibility" for the inadequate instructions given to prosecuting counsel. By letting the two discredited ministers hang on, the Prime Minister has only brought further discredit to his government. In Lyell's case there is a more serious issue: his position as principle law officer has a wider remit than merely political duties. He has a duty to resign.

A miasmatic revelation

FROM Shakespeare to the anonymous author of "Primary Colors" may seem a bathetic descent. But computers are dumb instruments which merely do what they are asked to do. Professor Donald Foster of Vassar College has been busy programming his very sophisticated machine to carry out two complex tasks of literary detection. Both have come to fruition at about the same time. It might have been awkward if the floppy discs had been mixed up but there was never really much chance of confusion. "She even smelled distant and formal, all soap and hair spray. I found myself thinking about the stiffness of her hair rather than what our bodies were doing." That, it is safe to say, is not from the *Funeral Elegy* now ascribed to Shakespeare. Similarly, a stanza reflecting on the time when "the proud height of much affected sin shall ripen to a head..." And fall amidst the glory of his tide" is hardly likely to be an allusion to the US president's habits in bed.

"Anonymous" we are now told by Prof Foster on the basis of computer-based "attributional study" techniques, turns out to be Newsweek writer Joe Klein. The literary detective did not start with an entirely open field: Mr Klein was one of some 20 names who had been pointed around by a ferociously excited Washington media. He was also the first of them to suggest that the most appro-

prate response would be to proclaim that "I am Spartacus". Fans of the superb Howard Fast novel (or else the less superb but still watchable film based upon it) will recall that the defeated slaves protected their leader by each and every one claiming the identity of Spartacus. The response of the baffled Romans was to crucify all 2,000 of them along the Via Appia. Mr Klein, alone or with the other 19, is not going to be crucified if the professor's identification is correct. He will merely be applauded all the way to the numbered account into which that Random House is paying vast royalties.

Whatever the value of this exercise, it enables us to gain some insight into the techniques used in the new science of attributional study. Prof Foster writes that while no single word or group of words has established Mr Klein's authorship, "the profile of his active vocabulary forms a matrix closely matching that of Anonymous." Adverbs, it appears, are a particular give-away. Anyone who has studied a number of unsigned texts — newspaper leaders, to take an example at random — will recognise the technique which can be applied in a less sophisticated form without the computer. When adverbs are in short supply, adjectives will usually do just as well. One writer will always describe any political process as "miasmatic" while another will dwell on the "sinister" agenda of some foreign politicians. The authorship of Primary Colors may not be very sinister once the truth is out, but the style is irredeemably miasmatic. With luck we can now stop reading about it.

The peace process has stumbled and the IRA has returned to violence: something in the peace negotiations has failed. We must learn not to treat such talks as a continuation of war, says MARTIN WOOLLACOTT

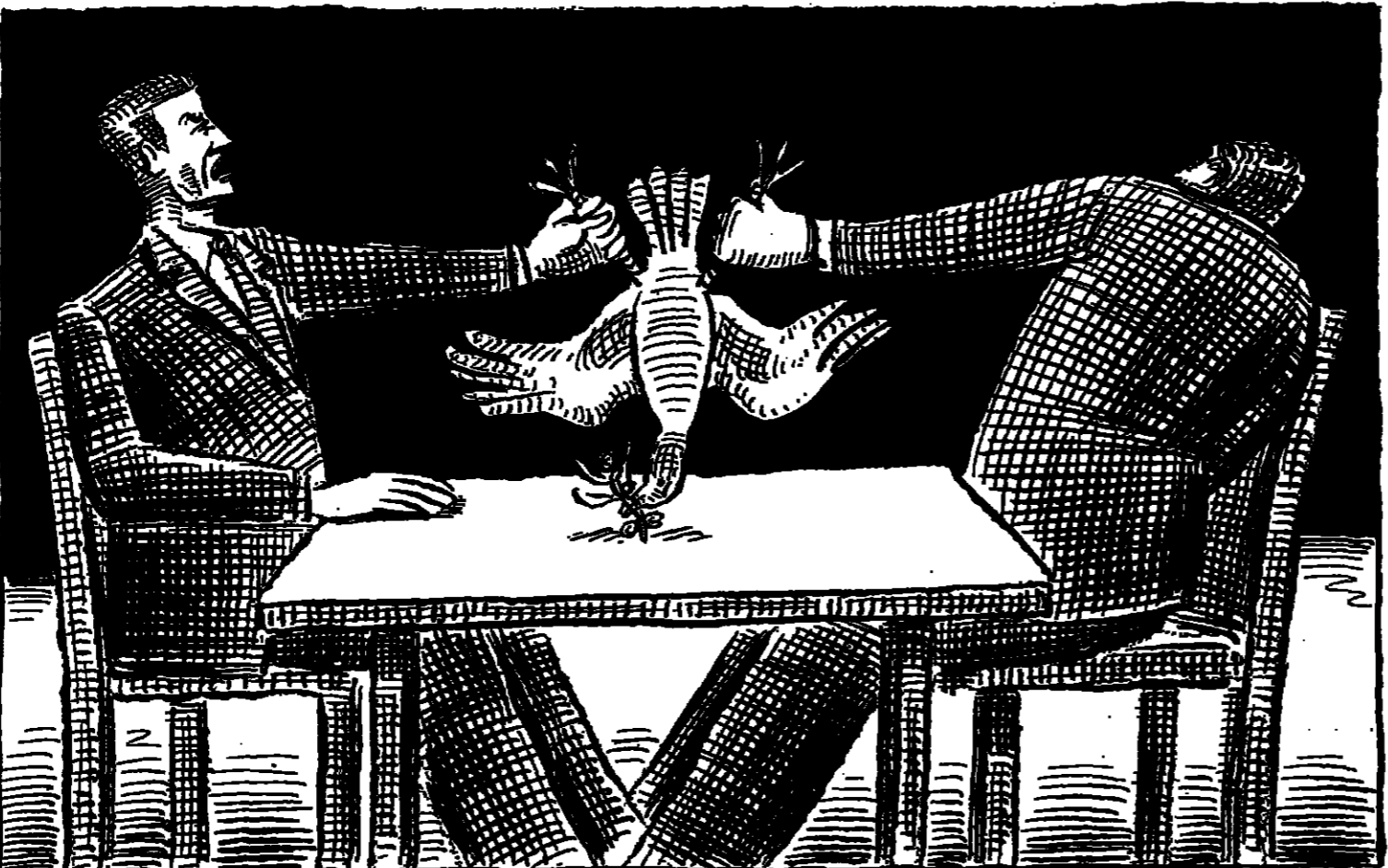


Illustration: PETER TILL

The sisters get tough



Joanna Coles

WE ALL know who they are and they are usually blonde and skinny. Sometimes, as in the case of Patricia Guppy, they drive black BMWs and talk "openly" for the first time to the Daily Mail. Patricia drinks Earl Grey in the upstairs bar of the Savoy — a picture of designer elegance in Edina Roman silk jacket, Donna Karan T-shirt and white Joseph jeans.

Or sometimes, as in the case of Diane Yeo, they barter a personal interview with the Daily Express for a mention of their pet charity. "Tonight Diane won't get home from her new job as chief executive of the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund For Children until 9pm! Does she find it difficult to trust a man who so publicly hums her?"

Or sometimes, like Gail Ronson, they prefer to say nothing at all, stoically swapping the royal reception line for the humiliating ritual of a prison's visitors' day in silence. (Though it's unlikely that anyone ever dared to strip-search Gail's fruitcakes when they were regularly sent down to Gerald for munching in Ford Open Prison.)

But whatever Patricia, Diane or Gail's particular way of dealing with their private disappointments, they share one thing in common. They have all been publicly derided. Out come the old Tammy Wynette headlines, out come the quills of enraged feminist columnists reaching with indignation. How dare Patricia stalk around in black leather trousers? How dare Lisa Leeson brush her bobbed blonde helmet and trot away from the media with a brave smile? How dare Diane Yeo take Tim back? If there is one thing we find harder to take than the men themselves, it's the women who stand by them.

The list grows by the scandal. Ann Parkinson, Judith Mellor, Jane Ashdown, even Jerry Hall. Forget Stepford or Hollywood, last month we had our very own Maxwell Wives, the abominably loyal Laura and Pandora. What was

it Helen Pennant-Rea, wife of the disgraced deputy governor of the Bank of England, said as she trembled on the doorstep of the family home last autumn? "It's been a hell of a living like this, knowing that at any moment she (Mary Ellen Synon — who finally flogged her book of England to the Sunday Mirror) might go to the press. We have just been literally waiting for the knock on the door. It's been 10 months of keeping it to myself."

You could hear the cries of "Leave him" echo across a thousand dinner tables. Silly bitch. But when did loyalty become a crime? Whatever happened to those famous words "for better, for worse"? No doubt the image of Mary Ellen wrestling greedily with Rupert's boxers on the Governor's carpet was not quite what Helen Pennant-Rea envisaged when, full of hope, she swapped rings at the altar.

And I doubt a \$1.8 million insurance scam, followed by a three-year jail sentence, was quite what Patricia Guppy imagined when she stepped into her ivory Jasper Conran and whispered "for richer for poorer". But are they to be punished for sticking to their wedding vows? Punished for their husbands' crimes? Ridiculed for trying, for wanting a second chance, for hoping they could make things better again? The quality of mercy is not strained.

We bring our hands about the soaring divorce rate, yet when a wife demonstrates public support we sneer roundly. We grumble about broken families, yet when Diane Yeo tries to gather up the fragments of her own broken brood we mock. We lament the decline of old-fashioned standards, yet when Hello! prints the story of the mistress — Julia Stein, Alone in Her Hackney Home — we flock out to buy it.

If it is mercy you are after, you will find precious little displayed in the media. Of course, not all wives want to try again. After 14 months of marriage, Julia Coles is perfectly entitled to file for divorce and has done just that. When Ernest was rumbled, Carol Saunders promptly fled to a clinic near Montreux. Good luck to them in their new lives. But those who bide on should not be derided for daring to put their faith in the future. Forgiveness is not a sin. And now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Finding the bone of contention

LONG-RUNNING conflicts are like springs which, bent out of their normal shape by efforts at settlement, always threaten a violent resumption of their original form. That is the lesson of Ireland, and the spectre which looms over the search for peace in Bosnia, in the Middle East, in the increasingly tense northeast Asian region, and in many other places.

War is a habit all too easily resumed, and peace a habit not easily learned. What breaks the back of peace processes? It is a central question as the unravelling of what had seemed to be done deals threatens the era of negotiations which the end of the cold war made possible.

achieving through non-violent means what could not be achieved by violence. Sometimes this comes out of what might be called the imperial cast of mind, the approach to negotiations of nations that have been or still are great powers, and who find it extraordinarily difficult to deal with antagonists on terms of equality. Even in making concessions they somehow find ways to affirm their primacy. Sometimes it is the challenge of such a power who raises the issue first. Soldiers know this moment well. It is the point at which the will of one side prevails over that of the other. It is the key to war but the worst of all approaches to peace.

The second factor is that once blood has been shed, once people have died for a cause, there is a kind of emotional investment in war that can often tip the balance against a peace that seems to amend or diminish that cause.

This is what has waxed and waned over the past five years as American attention, in particular, has wavered. The American engagement, after many wobbles, in Bosnia, Ireland and the Middle East has, for the moment, restored some of the momentum.

But it is the urge to dominate that most undermines peace. The lesson of recent peacemaking is that, initially, it succeeds only when such issues are avoided, as they were, for instance, in the Norwegian mediated talks between the Israelis and the PLO. The rub comes later, when one issue or another can become pivotal in a struggle for psychological ascendancy. In Ireland that issue is the decommissioning of arms. In the Middle East it is Palestinian statehood. In Bosnia, it is Bosnian statehood, in particular as it affects war crimes. In the Taiwan Straits, where there is admittedly no peace process but there had been a period of quietness which might have led in that direction, it is not the principle of one China but the question of who decides on the timing and form of reunification.

ations and aiming for victories that cast down the other side. There is always a tendency for war to go on by other means. The decommissioning issue in Ireland, for example, has no practical military significance. The British were and are well aware that the IRA would retain a military capacity even if there was disarmament.

THE turning point for the IRA may therefore have come when the Mitchell report seemed to sustain the British line that IRA arms were illegal, rather than when John Major made his proposal for elections.

Old powers with a tradition of thinking of themselves as the centre of the universe are prone to a reflex of dominance. The problem between China and Taiwan is not about the principle of Chinese unity, but about Beijing's demand for acts of submission to its will. The concept that China wants to defeat is the one that says that it is Taiwan that will decide when and if to make its commitment to one China a reality. In the former Soviet Union, there is evidence a Russian expectation of obedience, or of some kind of fealty, that makes the settlement of conflicts like Chechnya more difficult.

in Leeds and girls in Gateshead are reconciled to democracy by the knowledge that the Marquess speaks in the Lords for their age group is one which even Woodhenge at his wildest might hesitate to advance.

Smallweed's way in which the Tory MP Peter Luff complains to the Labour deputy leader, John Prescott and the deputy leader emeritus, Roy Hattersley, that they've visited his Worcester constituency without giving him the forewarning expected from decent chaps.

Suggestions that Hatt was there as a literary man, not a politician, do not, in the view of Luff, square with reports in his local paper that both MPs used their visits to slag him off for wishing to move to a safer constituency.

SEEK that Tony Blair's letter (signed by a suburbanite) to some Whitehall functionary, refusing to sit in the stocks clamped to a ball and chain while reading the Scott report, began: "Dear Alty" (not even a Mr; itself, I imagine, a form of rebuke. This recalls a curious correspondence which has come Smallweed's way in which the Tory MP Peter Luff complains to the Labour deputy leader, John Prescott and the deputy leader emeritus, Roy Hattersley, that they've visited his Worcester constituency without giving him the forewarning expected from decent chaps.

A padamir writer: I distrust the name Sphagnum. I think you have made it up. There is no one subscriber called Sphagnum in the Central London telephone directory, which moves direct from Spaziale-Baggiacca to Spibey.

Even real life comes up with better concoctions than Dame Babs Cartwheel. A piece by Douglas Morrison in the Guardian this week described a battle in Brighton where the chairman of the planning committee is Nimrod Ping and opponents of a road plan the fancies are led by Keith Tramplesure. Was Ping born a Ping, I wonder, or did he shed some monotonous name for a tingle one? No such doubts about Tramplesure, though, a name I'm sure he was born with. But what can it derive from? Though taking pleasure in trams is now widely prevalent among ageing nostalgics like me, it can't long have been around for that long. There's a lot of that around in Brighton these days, I'm sorry to say.

Smallweed



THE EXTRAORDINARY thing about the outcry which has greeted Tony Blair's plans to remove hereditary peers from the Lords is the feebleness of the case made against him. The Lord

Woodrow of Wyatt, for instance, who so movingly established his credentials as a world-class buffoon in a recent speech on the Broadcasting Bill, argues that peers, and hereditaries in particular, often speak out for the People where the Commons fails. He didn't cite, as he might have, the vote on preserving great sporting institutions from a buy-up by Rupert Murdoch, since, in that case, the forces of righteousness defeated his side; and in any case, the life peers supported Saving Our Sport in greater proportions than did the hereds.

That leaves us with the argument ad hominem. You can't get rid of hereditary peers, Lord Woeful and others maintain, because if you did, you'd deprive our ancient democracy of the Lib Dem peer, Lord Russell. Well, Russell, with that rapier intelligence which makes government social security spokespeople tremble, and his easy erudition, and his civilised senior common room jokes, is a splendid institution, well worth preserving. But is the whole hereditary principle to be kept on his account? Sodom and Gomorrah, I seem to recall, would have been spared had one just man been found there, but that's not a precedent which obediently transfers to consti-

tutional reform. Did Old Sarum or Grampound deserve to be saved because now and then their token electorates returned a decent MP? And in any case, if Russell ceased to be a hereditary they would swiftly make him a life.

Then there's the favourite argument that keeping hereditary peers means you sometimes get young people in the Lords as you never do in the Commons, and that it's good that the young should feel they are represented. But represented by whom? By the seventh Marquess of Cholmondeley perhaps? He succeeded his father when only 30, which is young by political standards. Here's his CV. Educated: Eton and the Sorbonne. Page of honour to HM Queen 1974-76. Hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain. Clubs: White's, Vanderbilt, Champney's, Cercle de l'Union Inter-alle. The notion that lads



The game of his life

Like other HIV-positive sportsmen before him, boxer Tommy Morrison now faces his greatest challenge: to educate his fans about the reality of Aids. JOHN DUNCAN reports

DON'T imagine for a second that it won't happen here. A press conference will be hastily called. A tearful high-profile British hero, head bowed, voice sombre, will read a short statement. He will tell 30 or 40 journalists and a bank of cameras and microphones that he is HIV positive. And, for a brief second, there will be a shocked silence.

He won't know how it happened. He won't know what it means for his career. He won't yet know how his team-mates, his fellow professionals will react, whether he can still go to the Olympics, the World Cup or whatever. He'll hope that someone somewhere will learn from his story. And the cruelly ironic evidence is that someone will from this rock-hard fall from grace, this sportsman will get the chance to help more people than he could ever have reached kicking a ball or sprinting out of the blocks. It happened this week to the American heavyweight boxer Tommy Morrison.

"To all my young fans out there I'd ask that you no longer see me as a role model," Morrison said, struggling to keep from crying, "but to see me as an individual who had the opportunity to be a role model and blew it. Blew it with irresponsible, immature decisions, decisions that one day could cost me my life. Think about that."

The public of the United States has been given plenty to think about by its sports stars in recent years as far as HIV is concerned, but it took a long time to get to the point where Magic Johnson could be welcomed back without reservation to a basketball court last week.

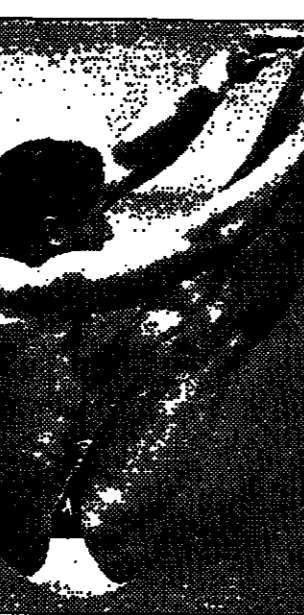
Up to then, America could pretend Aids was about other people or plain bad luck. The tennis star Arthur Ashe, for example, was just unlucky — the victim of an infected blood transfusion. And while the dignity with which he faced the disease helped America understand that this was not exclusively gay plague, if you hadn't had a major operation, well, it wasn't much to do with you, was it?

Greg Louganis, the top Olympic diver, came out as gay in 1994 and then admitted he had been HIV positive since 1988 and that at the Seoul Olympics he had allowed a doctor to treat him, unglorified, for a head wound. But he was gay, so he was always going to be at risk. So what's new?

Then, on November 7, 1991 that all changed. Earvin "Magic" Johnson, who had won five NBA basketball titles with the Los Angeles Lakers and was pretty much the biggest star the game had ever known, told the world he was HIV positive. No more pretending. If Aids could touch Magic Johnson, a consummate athlete, an icon to young black heterosexual America, it could touch anyone. And so, tragically, Aids education in the States had found one of its most potent symbols.

"I hadn't paid attention to the statistics." That was a message echoed by Morrison, who had fought Britain's Lennox Lewis. "There was a time in my life when I lived a promiscuous and reckless lifestyle," he said at a press conference broadcast yesterday by BBC Radio Five. "I knew HIV was something that anyone could get but I also believed that the chances were very slim. I thought the real danger was for people who have certain lifestyles, addicts who share needles, people who practise a homosexual lifestyle. I honestly believed there was a better chance of winning the lottery than getting the disease. I have never been so wrong in my life."

So for John Curry, the 1976 Olympic skating champion, is Britain's only sportsman victim of Aids. It's unlikely he will be the last. A glance through any Sunday tabloid makes one wonder quite how,



Big splash... Olympic diver Greg Louganis: gay and HIV positive. PHOTOGRAPH: DENIS PAQUIN

with the complex and multiple sexual exploits of several top footballers, the disease has not yet claimed a big name. "It almost certainly will happen," said Nick Partridge of the Terence Higgins Trust. "But we do have lower levels of infection generally than in America, and we have controlled the disease quite well, against the odds."

There are 6,500 people thought to be HIV-positive or to have Aids in Britain, with 11,872 cases of full-blown Aids reported since records began. In the US there are estimated to be 600,000 people infected with HIV, of whom half have Aids.

The irony perhaps is that Aids campaigns inevitably feed off its high-profile victims. "All the way through the epidemic, people with HIV have been central to getting the Aids message across," said Partridge. "At a mundane level that can mean someone with HIV going into a school to talk. But David at Flat 15 can only tell his story to his friends and colleagues; someone like Magic Johnson can speak to millions."

"They are able to humanise the disease and that is their key role, being able to tell the story of their infection with HIV to the people who are standing away from thinking of this as a monster virus and a scientific or medical curiosity, into something which is human, which affects people, and that's why they're so important."

The American public certainly seems willing to listen. Louganis's book, *Breaking The Surface*, is in its ninth reprint. Johnson's 1992 book, *My Life*, and Ashe's 1993 *Days Of Grace* both featured in the bestseller lists. "You can see at the time of Magic's announcement a short sharp rise in men and women going for tests in the US," said Partridge. A study in San Francisco reported a 20 per cent increase in testing in the seven weeks around Johnson's announcement, with the largest increases among women.

The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Centre noted a 41 per cent increase in anonymous HIV testing after Louganis admitted he had the virus. But what happens after the tears and the press conference? The first thing to face after your own fear is other people's. Magic Johnson's first comeback in 1992 had to be aborted after he was cut in a game and saw in the eyes of his team-mates a terror they had told him they didn't have. He universally welcomed return to action last week for the Lakers showed how awareness of the disease has grown.

But is it possible to forget too much, to ignore a real risk in allowing HIV sportsmen to continue to compete? Boxing, from which Morrison has now been suspended, has arguably the strongest case for banning HIV-positive competitors — anyone who has ever sat ringside will tell you how much blood is splattered during a bout. HIV tests before major fights are common practice and in July last year 33 South African boxers were banned after failing tests. Ruben Palacio was stripped of his world featherweight title in 1992 after contracting the disease.

But despite that, say experts, apart from a badly documented case in an Italian amateur football match, there is no evidence of any transmission in a sporting event. The odds of catching HIV during a football match are,

say some, about the same as Elvis landing in a spaceship on the head of the Loch Ness monster. But caution understandably prevails in contact sports. Rugby league has a "blood bin" where cut players must go to be treated and can be temporarily replaced. Fifa recently sent a directive to referees that any bloodied player must be sent from the field of play to be treated and may not return until there is no more bleeding and any blood-stained clothing has been removed.

Letting Johnson return though has been about more than cold facts. "What has been so vital about Johnson's comeback this time," said Partridge, "is that having been seen as the embodiment of the virus, he is able to say after a number of years, 'I'm still living with this, yes it affects my life, but it doesn't dominate it. I'm still the same person and I can still play basketball. That's an enormously powerful message to people with HIV, to their parents, their partners, their children.'"

Morrison, still some way behind Johnson, said this week in his first interview since telling the world he had the disease: "If getting up here today can bring this message to a rather large part of their problem. Britain is a country full of its own fears, but it is an observable fact that instead of getting angry, Londoners just put up with the IRA bombings. I'm not saying they wouldn't tear a bomber in two if they might one in the act. But if they have to evacuate their offices, then that's what they do. If they are delayed on the tube, then that's what happens. They just get on with it and hope for the best. And after all, what is the alternative?"

Intending no particular harm to others, they are troubled by the thought that anyone might want to murder them. It is like the wartime mood described by George Orwell in England *Your English*. "As I write, highly civilised human beings are lying overhead trying to kill me. They do not feel any enmity against me as an individual, nor I against them."

This is not to sentimentalise the English. Those phlegmatic, tolerant, pragmatic virtues on which the English pride themselves, have become very frayed at the edges in the post-war years. We remain in some respects a very violent people. And in many others this is a fearful society in a fearful world, more similar to others than we might suppose. Strip away the politics, and the fears of a woman in Belfast's streets will be strikingly similar to the fears of a woman in London's. For historical reasons, the Belfast woman will worry about paramilitary gunmen, but the fear that she shares with a woman in London is a fear of open places, especially at night and, above all, when she is alone. Real fear of this kind is potent and universal. For years, criminologists have tried to prove that the fear of crime is not related to the likelihood of



Knock-out blow... but Tommy Morrison still has a role. PHOTOGRAPH: TIM DEFIRSCO

With half of Britain's Jewish men now marrying non-Jews the faith is steadily dwindling, and yet, writes MADELEINE BUNTING, converting to Judaism remains a daunting, long drawn-out process

Flooding out, trickling in

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE to underestimate the explosive impact within the Jewish community of the survey on — you can't switch them off on the sabbath. "Michael was told when he went home that he should not eat his mother's food and to take plastic cutlery and paper plates to observe kosher."

"It's a power game for the dayanim [the religious judges]. They have the authority to define who is a Jew and we're going to use that power to affirm the legitimacy of their position; we are the most kosher because we are the most stringent. This has brought me to question the whole thing. You feel you are being used in a war of factions within Judaism. My kind of Judaism wasn't enough for them. They wanted me to become a sort of 'born-again' Jew."

"By making it so hard, you discourage people and it's not a good way to learn about Judaism. It is very formal and procedural; it is not a spiritual experience and you don't learn the meaning of prayer or Jewish history. You are not allowed to question."

Michael's experience is echoed in many of the cases Emma Klein collected for her book, *Lost Jews*. One practising Jew, the son of a distinguished Orthodox family, was astonished to discover he would have to convert after his synagogue found out his mother had been a Liberal Jew [the progressive wing of Judaism]. The Beth-Din told him his Hebrew studies at Cambridge might give him heretical views; then he refused to go and live with an Orthodox family. After several years, he gave up in London and went to Israel where he was promptly converted.

KLEIN believes the conversion procedures effectively force people into elaborate deceptions. "It is as if, unless you are a perfect person, you're not fit to convert." One woman with some Jewish ancestry was a model student, but she made the mistake of going off at weekends to stay with her Orthodox Jewish boyfriend, and was immediately dropped. Klein says the Beth-Din expect a much more exacting observance from would-be converts than the average Orthodox Jew, of whom only 10 per cent actually abide by all the laws.

In sharp contrast, the Jewish community in America has been far more open to converts. There are 200,000 Jewish converts, of whom Ruth is one. She had no Jewish blood at all but found a warm welcome in Washington. Anglo-Jewry has been sticking its head in the sand, ostrich-like, argues Klein, refusing to broach the issue of conversion because it taps straight into the bitter divisions between the ultra-Orthodox right wing and the more moderate mainstream Orthodox, as represented by the United Synagogue under its chief rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks.

These divisions all basically hinge on who is and who isn't Jewish. The final arbiter is the Beth-Din, which has been hijacked by ultra-Orthodox rabbis; it has established a suffocating stranglehold over the entire Orthodox community. Combine that with the rising inter-marriage rate and you have the scenario to realise the grimmest predictions.

until Saturday evening I was in a cold, damp flat with 10 or 15 children. I usually ended up trying to sleep with the lights on — you can't switch them off on the sabbath. "Michael was told when he went home that he should not eat his mother's food and to take plastic cutlery and paper plates to observe kosher."

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Fear and loathing on the streets of Belfast



Martin Kettle

YOU COULD hear the fear in her voice. Something about it made you stop what you were doing and listen. She was a Belfast woman, a Roman Catholic, interviewed on the Today programme one morning this week. She lives on the so-called peace line between Catholic and Protestant Belfast, and she told the pro-

gramme that, as a result of the Curragh Wharf bombing, she was now afraid again. It was a tone of fear I had last heard in the Balkans. She said it in a way that made sure you believed her. She told how she now thinks twice before answering the door-bell again. When she walks up the street, she finds herself watching all the cars again, in case they contain a gunman, just as she used to watch them in the bad old days before the cease-fire. Since last Friday she has wrapped herself once more in the physical and mental precautions of contemporary urban siege. Logically, this is a nonsense. Nothing has actually changed in Northern Ireland since last weekend. The IRA set off its bomb in London's financial district, not in the back streets of Belfast. It is

trying to put pressure on the British government, not the people of the six counties. It has no rational political interest in killing in Ulster at the moment. Let alone in killing this woman, though this is not to say it won't in the future. But logic often misses the point where people's fears take root. The trouble with logical analysis is that it may sound good in a briefing paper but it gets muddled up in the real world. People have a way of not responding in the way that politicians, including IRA politicians, would like them to. People have their own cultures, their own habits and their own ways of dealing with the world. The textbooks on political strategy don't contain many chapters on how people feel. A bomb goes off in London. People in Belfast respond with

it. They can prove beyond doubt that a given lone woman walking along the streets at night is not in danger of being raped. The statistics prove it conclusively. But the fear swamps the facts. People do not want to risk being the exception. No matter how irrational it may be, most people prefer to trust their instincts rather than the figures.

A bomb goes off in London. Belfast responds with fear. London doesn't seem afraid at all. This is not what the IRA intended

I had some neighbours in London a few years back. They were an old couple, retired, their children had long since moved away. She was Welsh, he was a Londoner. Nice people, always helpful, kind to the children in a friendly multi-racial street. One day I

went round to their house for some reason. The Welsh woman shouted from inside to know who I was. She opened the door on a chain. Then she apologised. She was worried that I might have been a black man. In that case, she said, she would have been too frightened to open the door. Many people would say she was a racist, and in a way obviously she was. But my neighbour's real problem was her fear. She was afraid of young black men knocking at her door. Rational? Irrational? That was not the point. She was a good woman and genuinely frightened. Putting labels on her would not have been any solution. It certainly would not have made her less fearful about black men knocking on her door. Fear is not something which politicians can operate like supply and demand in the economy. There is no policy mechanism like a tax shift or an interest rate change that can raise or lower the level of public fear, though it is demonstrably easier to create fear than to diminish it. It stands to reason that people in Northern Ireland are likely to be more fearful than people in

London about terrorism, just as it stands to reason that the reverse is the case with the fear of racial violence. But this does not mean that public policy should not be much more concerned about fear than it is. When politicians talk about the feel-good factor they always concentrate on a limited material calculus. "Will I be better or worse off financially this year than last?" is the only question that counts. They never talk about the other things, often much more prominent in people's self-perceptions, which go to make them feel good and bad. Are any of these more potent than people's fears? There is no more important task for any government than to address people's fears constructively. Government itself exists because of fear. If they fail to reduce it, governments fail in their principal responsibility to the people's agenda. That is why it is so important for the British government not to stand aside from its duty in Northern Ireland. That is why they must continue to talk to Sinn Fein. They must do it for the sake of the woman in the street.

Unionists take the stand

IN SPITE of the assurances we hear about the future of Northern Ireland, I deplore the empty words, covert intentions and flawed proposals that we have to endure.

I live in an open village which has been subjected to more than two dozen bombings and shooting incidents of terrorist origin. Not surprisingly, the physical condition and economic prospects of this place have been adversely affected, while decision makers and opinion formers have repeatedly obscured the reality of our condition. Like my neighbours I know that human life counts for little to terrorists; but my neighbours' unsung fortitude and friendliness is simply in keeping with the spirit and the courage of Ulster folk over 27 years.

The objectives and the track records of the political parties in this province should now be examined properly, because they are not necessarily in the best interests of our constitutional status or the standards of responsible citizenship in the UK. I next suggest that a challenge to that part of the three-stranded political talks in which "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" is long overdue. This utopian gobbledegook is most devious because it has ensured that the democratically expressed views of responsible citizens shall be ignored, to the benefit of political terrorists, a subversive faction, and hostile influences from abroad.

Finally, there is little doubt that a referendum on the improper constitutional claim of the Irish Republic and an overdue border poll here would lessen the credibility gap that presently exists — as the result of the great slaughter of innocent people by republican fanatics.

(Dr) R Common.
The Green,
Dumurry BT17 0QA.

IT SEEMS to have escaped the attention of proposers and opponents alike of special elections in Northern Ireland before negotiations can begin that an all-party and democratically elected body already exists in the United Kingdom (of which Ulster is, of course, part). This institution is called the House of Commons, and its proceedings are supervised by a neutral Speaker.

If it were thought necessary for political parties to renew their mandates, a general election would suffice. At one time Sinn Féin held one seat but didn't occupy it. If they or others were not successful this time round, a putative Speakers' Conference of all parties in the Commons could co-opt representatives of any group.

Bernard Cashman,
Church End, Biddenham Bedford MK40.

WHY should anyone negotiate with Sinn Féin or the IRA? Anthony Tuck's letter (February 15) is an excellent but partial reply.

In Africa, Nelson Mandela was locked up as a terrorist for over 20 years; look at him now. Jomo Kenyatta was imprisoned for nearly 10 years and was eventually the most successful president in Africa before Mandela. Israel's prime ministers and leaders have a record of service in Irqun and other similar organisations; they have now come to terms with Yasser Arafat. What is so special about our local "terrorists", Republican or Loyalist? Not speaking to the IRA will certainly lead to another endless round of violence. John Major should press on positively and recall the old Churchillian cliché about law being better than war-war.

Ian Hamilton,
Albert Road,
Richmond TW10.

A sermon preached to the clergy

THE senior clergy's salary level debate at the General Synod is a much wider and deeper disease within the Church of England (Synod turns down cut in 'fat cat' pay, February 15). The increasingly neurotic agendas of the Church point to the overriding issue now emerging, the institutional survival of the Church.

It is no use the Bishops telling us that they have no choice as to where they live. They could simply refuse to live in their castles, palaces and mansions and choose more modest accommodation, thereby providing a more credible witness and a not inconsiderable saving to the Church Commissioners.

Madeline Bunting (Church in a state, February 15) asks if the Church will be able to afford the parish system by the middle of the next century. The fact is that it cannot afford it now, not only in financial terms, but more importantly

in terms of mission. If the Church continues to protect itself from significant change at any level, it will only be at massive cost to its ability to engage in mission.

Is not the call to the Church today to break through into new forms of being the Church for today's and tomorrow's society? To hold this may be to direct it into the abyss.

P G Mitchell,
222 Wigan Road,
Bolton BL3 5QE.

DELICIOUS intrusion into the lives of non-religious people is bad, but not quite as bad as suggested by Keith Miller (Letters, February 16). Marriage ceremonies without any religious elements at all have been available at Register Offices for more than a century and a half.

Nicolas Walter,
Rationalist Press Association,
88 Islington High Street,
London N1 9EW.

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(Deirdre Sanders, Agony Columnist, The Sun)

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Scott, the Ministers and a surfeit of sophistry

THE use of sincerity as an excuse for the deceit and behaviour revealed in the Scott Report is a novel defence that might be applied more universally. Would the Government condone the activities of the IRA on similar grounds?

Moreover, if the sincerity of Ministers is defined as being a state in which "they believe what they were doing was right", does this not reflect on their schooling which should, in the words of many politicians, "have taught them the difference between right and wrong in the first place?"

Bill Duffin,
14 Orchard Croft,
Cottingham,
North Humberside HU16 4EG.

THE argument advanced by William Waldegrave that government policy on the sale of arms to Iraq had not changed since the guidelines remained intact even though the interpretation of them had been "relaxed", might give comfort to those who have recently left the Church of England.

Is it also the case that Church policy on (for example) the role of the priesthood has similarly remained unchanged, and is likewise merely the result of a more relaxed interpretation of the guidelines? Or do we have to accept that a sophistry you might just get away with in politics has to be recognised for what it is in matters of faith?

Phillip Mallett,
3 Main Street,
Guardsbridge,
Fife KY16 0UG.

SO William Waldegrave is guilty of sophistry (deceit) but he is not duplicitous (deceitful). Sir Richard Scott seems to be suffering from post-Tory inquiry syndrome.

John L. Stoneman,
18 Gleanfield Road,
Beckenham,
Kent BR3 3JU.

IT is not true to say that the Labour Party's front bench did not challenge the arms sales to Iraq in 1988 (Letter February 14). I was on Labour's front bench at that

time and I tabled an Early Day Motion on March 23, 1989 signed by 78 Labour MPs: "That this House notes the reports that British Aerospace, GEC, Racal, and other British firms will be attending the first Baghdad International Exhibition for Military Production in April; further notes that, although there is a ceasefire, there is no peace settlement to end the Iran/Iraq War, that Iraq has used chemical weapons in its persecution of the Kurdish people and that a recent Amnesty International report documents torture, including that of children, in Iraq; Majors; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to do all it can to discourage British firms from participating in the Exhibition by stating unequivocally that no licences will be granted for the export of arms and military equipment to Iraq."

Ann Clwyd MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

ONE of the defences given by the Government is that arms sales are shrouded in secrecy. The reason given for this secrecy is always "commercial confidentiality". But what is this whole episode illustrating is how wrong Ministers were to treat arms sales as being purely a commercial affair and to think they were entitled to make that judgment in secret.

Hundreds of individual citizens wrote to Ministers throughout the 1980s to raise concern over arms sales to Iraq. Now it is clear that the answers these people received were lies. This goes to the very heart of democracy. How can concerns, now recognised as so very legitimate, be addressed if it is acceptable for Ministers to conceal the truth?

Janet Williamson,
34 Probert Road,
London SW2 1BW.

LESSON one: if you are a Prime Minister, ex-Prime Minister or Chancellor and commission a 16lb box of "truth" to the Houses, risking everything to clear the

air, don't worry; nothing will stick. After all, just because you're the PM doesn't mean you know what's going on. And commissioning such boxes is so decent as to outweigh all else.

Lesson Two: People have had enough, not just of a Government of scoundrels, but of a range of scoundrels, from privatisation to war profiteering, but of a bankrupt two-party system whereby that Government either manipulates or gags both media and Opposition.

All Campbell,
47 Burton Fields Road,
Stanford Bridge,
York YO4 1JJ.

THERE now appear to be three tests in law: civil — on the balance of probability; criminal — beyond all reasonable doubt; political — beyond all reasonable doubt and then some.

D Tebb,
15 Cavendish Road,
Guiseley,
nr Leeds LS20 0DW.

CAN I assume that Hugo Young (February 16) intended to be as ironic as Mark Anthony in his speech about Brutus after the death of Caesar when he referred to honour and honourability?

Sean Henderson,
71 The Rake,
Bromborough,
Wirral,
Merseyside L62 7AF.

IN 1988, men, women and children died in agony after Saddam Hussein's military bombed Halajha in Kurdish Iraq with poison gas. Foreign Office Intelligence would have known better than most the gruesome nature of the Iraq regime. By helping arm this regime throughout 1988 and 1989, certain Government ministers and civil servants are guilty of more than a transgression of Parliamentary protocol. They are accessories to genocide.

David Lovelace,
Pool Cottage,
Norton Canon,
Hereford HR4 7BP.

HAVING just listened to Michael Heseltine, I am astonished to find that a terrible conspiracy has been perpetrated on the British people. Apparently the Labour Party, the BBC and, for all I know, the Guardian itself has spent

Cash on course

WE deny that this Funding Council is threatening to strip London Guildhall University of its Government grant from April this year (Budget threat to university's future, February 15).

We are looking to the university to produce a viable recovery plan next month which tackles its financial problems on a long term basis. The HEFCE will need to be reassured that the plan and subsequent action taken by the university safeguards the education of students and the continued investment of public money.

Rob Ewell,
HEFCE,
Northavon House,
Coldharbour Lane,
Bristol BS16 1QD.

Letters to the Editor may be faxed on 0171 837 4530 or sent by post to 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER, and by e-mail to letters@guardian.co.uk. Please include a full postal address and telephone number.

Positive about women too

BODY Positive, as the major self-help group for people living with HIV and Aids in the UK, strives to be accessible to everyone living with the virus (Body blows, February 15). Your article alleges that gay men want the organisation for themselves.

On the contrary, following a survey of our members, a recent Strategic Review report found that "the majority view within Body Positive is that it should provide an inclusive service for all."

Of the 11 trustees on the Board following the AGM in November 1995, five were women. Body Positive does have an agreed Equal Opportunities policy and we are committed to monitoring its implementation.

The article implies that funding secured for the provision of women's services has been reallocated to other areas of expenditure. During the current financial year, 17 per cent of the organisation's expenditure has been designated

Deals 'n' meals

FROM my place in what he terms the gutter, I am delighted that the Labour administration in Liverpool, led for the time being by Harry Rimmer, is no longer considering school meal cuts (Letters, February 15). To clarify the matter — there were two budget options listed amongst many: Number 62, which proposed, as has been done in Buckingham, to provide only the statutorily required free school meals, and Number 63, which proposed a 10 per cent reduction in meal size.

It follows logically, as reflected in the officer's comments in the report, that if only free school meals are provided and they are reduced by 10 per cent, then only children from poorer families will suffer. Not what one would expect from a paradigm of municipal socialism, admittedly, but true nonetheless.

(Clr) Paul Glenn,
Liberal Democrats,
34 Rawlins Street,
Liverpool L7 0JF.

A Country Diary

NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE: Hereabouts it is called the Best of Bonnach after the quiet Teifi side village where apparently it first appeared. It stalks the local papers. One farmer, who claimed not to have seen it, suggested it had been eaten by now. It had ever existed in the first place. It turns the public attention away from the awkward question of what your pet dog may be doing. A dog eating a live sheep is a disturbing sight, especially if it is one of a dirty grey flock waiting to lamb in a field of white snow. In one incident the sheep, still alive, was slung in a corner, gurgling in front of it whilst its back was ripped by voracious teeth — all the work of two dogs. When they were tracked down, the owners' disbelief was scornful. Certainly one of the dogs had been away from home, but he was a renowned Llanrhio. This time his love had been so powerful he hadn't eaten for 10 days. He has been re-located. The other one is a bitch, a pet sheep dog. She is going to be spayed and more carefully supervised.

What good that does remains to be seen during lambing. One summer a family were having a picnic on a hillside they were sharing with sheep. Their dog was loose. When the farmer appeared it was ripping a sheep with its teeth, blood round its muzzle. The family munched their sandwiches. "What's the matter?" they cried. "They're just playing together." Sheep are not fighters. Even a ram has been killed, all 2900 worth of him. The farmers have enough to do at the moment. Manure and slurry over the fields. Flocks of pregnant ewes to be collected in ready for lambing. Some lambs were born in January — the earlier to market the better the price — but now is the main season and much hard work. Machines make farmers mobile, but no machine replaces a good shepherd.

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تسكن من الجمل

Joan Armatrading has been in pop since 1973, yet not much more is known about her now than was then. The puzzle remains: how does this reclusive and private woman write songs about the intimacies of love?



Photograph: DAVID SILLITOE

Singer who likes sound of silence



INTERVIEW

JOAN Armatrading has a wonderful voice — a rich, bitter-sweet, chocolatey sound. She has written some of the most affecting pop songs there are about love and break-ups. But she is also the interviewee from hell; the kind who, when asked where she lives, answers "somewhere".

disdains the changing fashions in pop music and has always refused to tweak her image to please the marketing people. Her biggest hit was *Love and Affection*, released in 1976, which begins: "I am not in love but I am open to persuasion." *Love and Affection* was not inspired by her experience of interviews. She rarely gives them and only agreed to this one because, she says: "I am not stupid. I know what I have to do to sell my songs." A single, *Everyday Boy*, is being released next week, to coincide with her nomination for Best Female Artist at Monday night's Brit Awards. If she wins and goes up on stage to collect the award, it will be like the sighting of a rare nocturnal animal, caught in the lights.

She was born in St Kitts in 1950, the third child of six, and the only one to end up working in music. (What do the rest do? "Things.") In fact, her collector like some who only buy first editions in mint condition. I just buy a lot of them to read and then keep them. I like to get old comics — *Love and Rockets*, *Tales From The Crypt*, *Superman*, *Batman*, *Fantastic Four*, and one called *Hate*.

Her sexuality has been a constant source of speculation but no one appears to know for sure who she has loved and her songs are deliberately neutral, the lovers non-gender specific. Her most recent album, *What's Inside*, is more personal than previous ones. (There is a song on it called *Trouble*, a tribute to her mother for surviving the hardships of her life — on which Armatrading refuses to elaborate.) "Overall, this album is more personal than the others," she says, "but it is not a trend."

We met at the offices of RCA, her record label, in Fulham. An assistant brings her a mug of hot water, the only thing she drinks, apart from the occasional orange juice. Armatrading is 45, small, dressed in black, hiding behind her hair. She does laugh, but usually at the interviewer and often in place of an answer. All of this should be intensely irritating but, oddly, talking to her is enjoyable. It is not so much a game of cat and mouse, as tiger and flea. Her prickliness comes in industrial strength. It is a real, raw distrust of the human race.

She laughs at that. "I certainly used to be and the human race. I didn't like people very much. People have very nasty ways about them, don't you think? But I am much better now." She says she has learned to give human beings the benefit of the doubt, up to a point. "The trouble is then they sometimes go and do what you suspected they would do in the first place."

Armatrading left school at 15, and worked for two years as a typist, and then accidentally landed a part in the musical *Hair*, after accompanying a friend who was auditioning. She left *Hair* after a year to write music, at first in partnership with an old friend, Pam Nestor. "We wrote the songs, went to a record company, signed a contract," she says, expansively.

Armatrading of sitting on the political fence. She has never written songs about racism, for instance, or homelessness. She shrugs, and replies that she doubts whether she shares the same experiences of other black people in Britain. "I don't want to be a black person writing about black issues that I don't know anything about. Let's not have my watered-down version. Other people write political songs. That's what they're good at."

As Hillingdon prepares to host its own Disney-style theme park, DAN GLAISTER doubts if British film has quite the allure of Hollywood

The theme machine

IMAGINE the scene: it is the near future, you are cruising bumper-to-bumper at a futuristic 20 miles-per-hour along the A40. The children, in the back of the space cruiser, are becoming increasingly agitated. Then, out of the grey afternoon gloom, looms the sign that has brought a little bit of Hollywood to this dismal expanse of west London. Spelt out proudly in huge cardboard letters, a homage to its inspiration and funding, the single word "Hillingdon" dominates the landscape. "Welcome to Wurrer Brothers Movie World" reads the sign.



Laugh a minute: anyone for the Norman Wisdom experience?

ers can seek solace in either Rick's Cafe (oh come on, you must remember that) or Dirty Harry's, the bar of the film of the character. But Lord Hollick, who has had a hell of a media week, promised more. "The park will celebrate the best, the dearest in British film-making," he said. "It will feature a number of entertainment featuring films made at Ealing, Shepperton, Pinewood and Eelrose. Entertainment? What could

Those would be the high points. The Norman Wisdom Experience anybody? Cheeky chappies tripping up, spilling their tea on you. Or how about *Carry On Up The Theme Park* — a fun ride for all the family — ruddy doctors indulging in serial bottom-pinching and doubles entendres to make the punters guffaw.

into modern merchandising I don't know." There is another problem. Why should anyone want to go to a site with no connection to Britain's film history, even if it does have unsurpassed transport links? "Pinewood is more likely to be able to make something out of the theme park, but this is coming out of nowhere," says Finney.

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Tomorrow, David Hare's *Skylight* could clean up at the Olivier awards. So why has theatre's most outspoken social commentator retreated from public life? PETER LENNON reports

Just leave me alone

IN THE year between Lancing and Cambridge, David Hare went on a "99 days for 99 dollars" tour of the United States with a school friend, Roger Danczy, now headmaster of the City of London School.

This turned out to be a magical tour of most that was bizarre, brave or evil in America. They found temporary jobs doing filing work for a Hollywood psychiatrist. Watts went up in flames while they were in LA; they stayed briefly with an aristocratic Southern family who had struck the president off their guest list "because of the terrible things Lyndon and Lady Bird are doing in Vietnam". And they had a formal audience with the notorious Alabama governor, George Wallace, then in full racist fervour.

This was a fertile initiation for an aspiring dramatist but, while already passionately committed to social justice, Hare gave no sign of wanting to be a playwright (unlike the third of this group of lifelong friends, Christopher Hampton). "He was an edgy youth," says Danczy, "brilliant enough to have a temporary job at the age of 17 teaching A-level English to boys of 18. He is less edgy now. More mature."

Thirty years later, the undergraduate of the \$99 trip has become a monumental figure of the British theatre — as much a part of national institutions as the National Theatre itself. Tomorrow, his latest play, *Skylight*, is in line to clean up at the Olivier awards, with nominations for Best Play, Best Actor (Michael Gambon) Best Actress (Lia Williams) and Best Direction (Richard Eyre). It is possibly the summit achievement of a director-writer partnership that has come as close as anything in the theatre to a national institution — spawning meditations on the church, the law and parliament and making the theatre briefly fashionable again among churchmen, judges and politicians.

What will happen to that institution when Eyre leaves the National next year, putting an end to a collaboration lasting two decades? Hare will doubtless adapt. He is a child of the subsidised theatre, yet has shown he can make it in the West End. At 49, married now to designer Nicole Farhi, he is a prize-winning playwright and film-maker (his film *Weathering the Golden Bear* in Berlin), and a director of both theatre and television.

Behind it all is a man preoccupied with perhaps the most relevant of contemporary dilemmas: how can the well-intentioned, the morally good person effect change in this society? How can he or she intervene to preserve the health, education, transport and now the peace of the nation when self-interest or downright barbarism rides triumphant? Hare has been pounding away at this since the early seventies when, before it became a popular issue, he, Trevor Griffiths and Howard Brenton set out to write a play that would stop Nestlé selling powdered milk to African mothers. He got his first lesson then: Nestlé took no notice.

He has gone on in various ways since. In *Pravda* he attacked the influence of media barons; in his nineties trilogy, *Racing Demon* (a surprise success on Broadway) he dealt with the failure of liberalism in the Church; *Murmuring Judges* looked (not too incisively) at the law; and in 1995 his *Absence Of War*, drawing on the Labour Party campaign of 1982, described the destruction of a labour leader who sacrificed his principles in a vain hope of winning.

Long before he got to *Skylight*, Hare had recognised another element in the battles fought by decent people: their motivation is complex and can never be immaculate. Hare's two children by his first wife, the independent television producer Margaret Matheson, went to a private school, run by his old friend Danczy.

Skylight has a supposedly irredeemably crass businessman and an apparently idealistic schoolteacher perform a toe-to-toe slogging match of defining each other and themselves, while at every turn evading simple definition.

"Why do you think I'm working where I am?" shouts the teacher furiously. "I'm sick of this denial of everyone's potential. Whole groups of people just written off!" But are those her only motives? At the height of his maturity, Hare no longer needs to spell things out. Yet he has now gone into the business of self-definition himself. He is attempting to define himself exclusively as an artist rather than a polemicist, sometimes in contradiction of the evidence. To this end he decided to stop giving interviews. The endless appeals to go on TV shows as a pundit after *The Absence Of War* last year, and particularly following his publicly-stated opinions of John Major and Tony Blair, made him fear that people were reducing him to his opinions when he sees his work as operating in that area of free and fruitful ambiguity that is the artist's playground.

But while denying the documentary nature of work such as *The Absence Of War* (his intention was only to write fiction about political leadership which happened to be inspired by political events), he cannot help admitting to friends his satisfaction that Peter Mandelson — who was hostile to the decision to give him access to the Party — once told him that the details of the piece were extraordinarily accurate. "There is an enduring contradiction here: he also likes to be defined as a good documentarist. The unfair advantage the artist has of course is that he can have it both ways. Will history see the facts or just savour the fiction of 'The Absence Of War'? Indeed, will he care about theatre at all? Hare is certainly one of the rare ones who stands loyally



Hare (top) is regarded as a polemicist after plays like *The Absence Of War*, his Labour party critique with John Thaw (above), and *Skylight* with Michael Gambon and Lia Williams. But he has stopped giving interviews because he fears that the media is beginning to see him as a politician rather than an artist.

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: NOBBY CLARK

by the theatre, the beleaguered, besieged theatre, apparently abandoned and largely ridiculed by youth, like the Labour party it has been described as "an entrenched tribe which does not have the courage to criticise itself". Some believe that the ideological battles of the sixties, when Kenneth Tynan laid into Terence Rattigan and Charles Marowitz scorned Peter Brook, were a sign of a healthy and confident theatre. They long, as Hare must, for those old freedoms.

But there came a point when people believed that Margaret Thatcher really wanted to close the National Theatre and undermine all subsidy, so there was a decision to stop being self-indulgent: a strategy was needed to ensure that the principle of public subsidy would survive. It became a strategy of silence. It is to this silent, discreet, apprehensive world that Hare is committed. He has very lately begun to let it be known that he would like to withdraw that put on the head he gave John Major — "decent and honest". As for Labour, friends say he is horrified to see how easily people he believed to have convictions

seem to be moving over in the hope of knightships and power. He sees it as a sign of exhaustion on the Left that people should buy into something when they are being offered so little — a party with no programme other than to get rid of the Tories. He is terribly afraid that people might see him as part of the New Labour Establishment. And he would nearly break his monastic vows to say so.

Skylight opens at Wyndhams on Tuesday. David Hare directs *The Designated Mourner*, opening at the Gielgud on April 24.

It's the way we tell 'em

Television

Stuart Jeffries

THE FAST SHOW (BBC2) at least has an appropriate name — more than 20 sketches in 30 minutes, and all of them funny. If other TV programmes were named with such descriptive accuracy, Coronation Street would be called *The Street That Time Forgot* and *French And Saunders* (four unfunny sketches in 30 minutes) *Will It Ever End?*

Even in a very fast show, there was time for a finely executed sketch about boredom. This was a resonant delight, since so many British comedy shows offer boringly executed sketches about nothing very much. Paul Whitehouse's face, shifting from delighted charm to loathing for the animator who explained in eyeball-rolling detail how he composed one of his model animals for a shot, told you all you ever needed to know about being on the receiving end of a tedious monomaniac.

The jokes often rely on these neatly observed reaction shots as a character realises that the other person is bonkers, stupefyingly dreary or simply from the Isle of Man. But the best of the sketches exploit the comic potential of two qualities that have been regularly used in the most effective British comedy — repetition and embarrassment. In fact, it's a little perverse to review the first show of the new series, since it is only as the characters become familiar, as the tiny variations deepen the humour of the original idea over succeeding episodes, that their full comic force will be realised — just as with *Via Reeves Big Night Out*. Indeed, to watch the recent repeats of the first series was more entertaining than seeing them first time around. There was one weekly

sketch in the first series that consisted of such a slender idea as to beggar belief. A country cove's personal patter for a country matters programme was continually interrupted by his cough. That was all there was to the joke, but through repetition, with tiny twists each week, it achieved comic power.

Not for nothing is the show crammed with catchphrases, and parodies of catchphrases, that are repeated every week. They are also repeated in playgrounds, factories, and offices ("Scorchio!"). "Little boys, coats for coats, three and in — isn't it?" as we join in interactive comedy whose heritage is deeply inscribed in British comedy history, from music hall to the reciting of Monty Python sketches.

The best US sitcoms — Larry Sanders, *Cheers* — are to be cherished passively; the best British comedy — from sitcoms such as *Adrian Mole*, "Do you want to be a 'Stupid boy'?", "We're all doomed!" to sketch-based shows such as *Harry Enfield* ("You didn't want to do that", "Let's rock!") — irresistibly induce you to perform the highlights you seek to participate in the very pleasures that the actors no doubt experience in their original performances.

As for embarrassment, *The Fast Show* can often produce exquisitely painful moments, which again are very well suited to the British temperament and have their comic touchstones — the object *Fawlty Towers*, the abject *Sorry*. The social gaffe in post company that leads to the catchphrase "I'll get my coat!" is the classic. Hare wants to be loved by the other blokes and so twists his opinions endlessly to match theirs; the vaguely homoerotic and utterly disarming sketch of a bot's unrequited fondness for his gardener — there is a sense of the piano's inclusion, and, often, a theme of men's feeble struggle to be intimate with each other. Occasionally, it's a struggle that is more poignant than laughable.

Pianist Jack Gibbons flattens Alkan in a marathon recital at the QEH

The key to it all?

THE COMPOSER and virtuoso pianist Charles-Victor Alkan is one of the more curious lost causes in 19th-century French music. He wrote a vast number of piano pieces in a wildly virtuosic style in which Moscheles, Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt come into violent collision, and which pays little heed to the technical demands it places upon performers.

In the second half of the 20th century Alkan has attracted a devoted following, including the British pianists Ronald Smith and John Ogden. The young Oxford-based player Jack Gibbons is the latest to take on the challenge. He has already recorded Alkan's 12 Etudes for CD, and here at the Queen Elizabeth Hall he gave what was the first-ever London performance of all of them in a single, marathon concert.

The Etudes in the *Minor Keys* sum up the strengths and weaknesses of Alkan's output. Taken in sequence, they contain around two hours' music. Four of them, Nos 4, 5, 6 and 7 make up a symphony for solo piano, while Nos 8, 9, and 10 constitute a concerto in which the piano takes both the orchestral and the solo roles; the final number is a set of 25 variations based upon the characters in Aesop's Fables. It is ex-

traordinary stuff, the product of an eccentric musical mind more concerned with extravagance than either musical quality or memorability. Alkan may have been expert at concocting the most intricate passages work, but he wasn't good at writing tunes or ordering his ideas in a concise and rigorous way.

To make the pieces come alive, to turn them into music, the ideal Alkan pianist needs much more than mastery of the details of the music; he has the notes under his fingers, but his ability to build upon that foundation is limited. There may be inner life in all those cascades of figuration, and a palette of keyboard colour to be drawn from Alkan's treatment of the piano's sonority, but Gibbons doesn't look for them; his playing confined itself to a narrow range of dynamics that never rose above run-of-the-mill forte and never attempted a genuine pianissimo, while his sound was resolutely monochrome.

There is something remarkable about Gibbons's playing, but it isn't his ability to transform Alkan's aspirations into music. It's the sense of watching a technician try a complex mechanism without ever understanding its meaning.

Andrew Clements

CHRISTOPHER ZINN at Tropicana, Sydney's booming festival of short films

Short but perfectly formed

MOVE OVER Carnie: step aside, Sundance; the Tropicana Short Film Festival has arrived, and it's attracting big-name Hollywood stars.

Last Sunday, the participants gathered outside a café in Sydney. Nicole Kidman was there, with George Miller (the producer of *Babe*), Jane Campion (director of *The Piano*) and thousands of other representatives of the Australian film industry. In the three years since its inception, the Tropicana has grown into a very big thing indeed.

Last year's winner, a three-minute black comedy called *Swinger* made by Gregor Jordan for £200, went on to win the Jury Prize for the Best Short at the Cannes Film Festival, and cinematically Australia has never been hotter. Campion is widely regarded as the world's best female director: the animated pig tale

Babe is in line for the Best Film Oscar. Strictly Ballroom and Muriel's Wedding were international box-office successes; and Kidman won plaudits for her role as a TV weathergirl in *To Die For*.

Dotted along Victoria Street in the Sydney suburb of King's Cross, large screens and monitors exhibited the best 20 of the Tropicana's record entry of 99 shorts. A handful were made as big-budget calling cards but most were shot on a shoestring. First prize for the competition section included £1,500, in cash while the winner of the open section had to make do with one year's free coffee at the self-styled "Trop" and five cinema passes. The real prize is exposure.

The films, shot on every kind of film in every kind of style need only meet two criteria. They must be seven minutes or less and must be made for the "Tropfest".

To prove this, all films must feature an item intrinsic to the Tropicana café's operation. This year it was a teaspoon, which inevitably spawned at least two films about heroin addicts, but in the past it has been objects as innocent as a muffin.

The festival's founder and director, actor John Polson, said it was created to stop people just talking about making films and "get them out into the streets". Ideas, not production values, count.

George Miller, one of the few celebrities who was not on the judging panel, said he believed the next generation of Australia's film-makers were to be found at Tropfest. "The raw energy and resourcefulness you get off the street is more valuable than all the careful nurturing of the film school," he said.

Finalists included the strangely violent poetry of *Levi Fly* to the two-minute,

one-line joke of Clay Robbins's *A Matter of Honour*, which was shot in the UK. There was also a very nasty homage to splatter films called *Mud*, and a violent killer-on-the-road story which featured a bloody drive-by shooting at the Trop itself, raising a round of applause.

But it was a Super 8mm black-and-white comedy called *This Film Is A Dog*, starring a dog as a documentary film-maker with an anti-nuclear story to tell, that took first prize.

Film-maker Jonathan Ogilvie shot some of the film with his beloved pet — and film-star — Quinn, and edited it together with footage he'd taken of pampered pooches in Cannes while there with another short last year.

Old Trop hands complain that the festival has outgrown its roots — the rejected entries are being shown in a fringe festival all of their own.



Campion... Piano maestro



Kidman... back from LA

Ambridge gets anal

Radio

Lyn Gardner

GARDENERS' Question Time (Radio 4) is the best half-hour comedy programme on the radio. It's all those Latin names. I liked the thistle mentioned this week whose name sounds like "silly bum".

Then there's the endless talk of manure. Not of course, that after Caroline's little outburst in *The Archers* (Radio 4) on Monday. She told newish husband Guy that his son Simon was behaving like an "utter shir". Ambridge and the nation are still reeling. What I like about *Gardeners' Question Time* — besides the sense of humour — is the sense of certainty. There is no room for doubt. No, you absolutely do not use Coca-Cola to activate the compost heap even if the Internet suggests that it's a pretty smart

idea, and yes, we will be dispensing with the pink flowering cherry tree in the back garden now that Pippa Greenwood has informed us that they are unforgivable blonny.

You will probably recall that after an altercation with the BBC over contracts, the original *Gardeners' Question Time* team departed to Classic FM and *The Classic Gardening Forum*. This is *Gardeners' Question Time* with music. I'm not entirely convinced that this is really added value (too much Bach and not enough bark), although I admire the producer's restraint in resisting the temptation to play Percy Grainger all the time. Fortunately the Dr Stefan Buczaczi from Stratford-upon-Avon (presumably so called to differentiate him from Dr Stefan Buczaczi from Romford and Dr Stefan Buczaczi from Bognor) and Fred Downham (from Lancaster) double-act continues to thrive in these commercial pastures. Stefan and Fred have always been the Morecombe and Wise of radio gardening, but I note

that of late Fred seems to have developed a rather more philosophical bent. This week we were treated to that ancient Classic FM proverb: "Gardening is a bit like life, the more you put into it the more you get out of it." So right, Fred. In *Gardening Under the Raj* (Radio 4), *Classic Gardening Forum* regular Sue Phillips (from Chichester, in case you were wondering) looked at how the British attempted to transform the plains of India into little oases of Surrey. For a century from 1850 to 1950, the Meeranabhis wasted more water than the Yorkshire Water Authority trying to grow roses, petunias and dahlias only to have the blooms devastated and trees stripped bare by plagues of locusts, herds of elephants or poor herdsmen desperate to find food for their animals.

Not a single person interviewed questioned the right of the English to their herbaceous borders. The Meeranabhis might have tottered, but these old India hands were never going to throw in the towel.

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ALEX DUVAL SMIT

Far from joining western movements, post communist Russian artists are looking to a Stalinist-fascist aesthetic. JOHN O'MAHONY reports from St Petersburg

Beauty up there in red lights

FEW of the pundits who crammed into the luxuriously dingy Rock Club had come to sample the noxious, neo-nationalist delights of the National Bolshevik Party. Interest in the smoky, cramped, low-ceilinged hall was focused less on the politicians than the prominent members of the St Petersburg artistic community who had come to lend support: artist Timur Novikov, leader of the Neo-Academy movement and Sergei Kuryokhin, a musician, performer, founding father of the city's avant-garde movement and organiser of the event.

"The National Bolshevik Party is the only hope for our political life," said Kuryokhin, opening the proceedings. "The current political scene is completely bereft of ideas. What we need is a state that is romantic, great, beautiful."

Little was said in what followed about the party's plans to resurrect the Soviet Empire, its affectionate attitude to Stalin and its mélange of racist prejudices towards English, Chechens and other minorities. Discussion centred instead on proposals for the rule of Russia "by an artistic elite". There were complaints that contemporary Russia "was castrating the creative impulses of society".

At one particularly low point, attention settled on Timur Novikov. The question that came from the floor was one of the many bewildered enquiries that have been bouncing around the hall. What on earth was he doing there? How deep were his sympathies with his fellow-speakers? Why was he associating himself with the doctrines of extremism?

Novikov shrugged: "I'm not interested in politics," he said, "I just follow beauty wherever it goes."

From a western perspective, it seems inconceivable that the first generation of artists to be freed from the bondage of Soviet cultural control should harbour nostalgia for totalitarian certainties, that they should hark back to "Socialist Realism", the natural enemy of progressive 20th century western Modernism.

Stalin's attempt to transform artists into "engineers of the human soul" was always viewed from the West as little more than narrow-minded, antiquated, insipid illusionism which sought to conceal the drab reality of soviet life behind a daubed array of heroic factory workers striding boldly into a rosy socialist future.

Given a prominent place in the hierarchy of cold-war mythology, it was a symbol of the intolerance and paranoia of the Soviet system, an oppressive aesthetic blooded by Stalin's vicious cultural purges of the thirties during which the Modernist renaissance of the preceding decades had been brutally snuffed out.

The natural corollary to the western viewpoint is that when Perestroika lifted these restrictions, Russian artists would rejoice in the Modernist tradition in a blaze of thwarted, pent-up creativity. But for some curious, soundly historical reasons, this has not happened. There has been no second coming of the Futurists, no new Malevich, Tatlin, Stepanova, Popova.

Paradoxically, the luxury of freedom created as many problems as it solved, sweeping away the hero status of the non-conformist, often revealing work whose only prior achievement was its very existence. And while the government may no longer use bulldozers — as it did on one infamous occasion in Moscow back in 1974 — to try to plough exhibitions out of existence, bulldozers do somehow manage now to flatten galleries to clear prime real estate.

Artists have been affected as pensioners or scientists by the gulchlike chaos, the shallowness of reforms, the social and economic Treaty of Versailles that many feel the West has imposed on Russia.

In response to the contemporary situation, Moscow has adopted the tactic of provocation, a kind of radical "dirty Modernism". An example of this is Moscow performance artist Oleg Kulik who has photographed himself in acts of bestiality with farm animals in order, he claims, to exorcise the feral, brutal spirit motivating contemporary Russia through the vehicle of the self. In St Petersburg however, set aside by their haughty provincialism and inspired by the Neo-classical backdrop of the city, a number of local artists moved in an entirely different direction.

By embracing a decadent, ultra-conservative aesthetic flavoured with nationalism, work located somewhere between Socialist Realism and the art of Fascist Germany, they are attempting to find answers to the questions confronting contemporary Russian culture that are far more devious and, despite the conspicuous lack of pigs or sheep, much more dangerous.

The group producing this work is located in The New



The future, left - Timur Novikov (standing), from his The Golden Age - and the past he opposes ...

Composition (1916), top, by Lyubov Popova; Victory over the Sun (detail), above by El Lissitzky ...

and Untitled (1922) by Ivan Kluin, above

Academy, a handful of dilapidated rooms in 10 Pushkinskaya Street, the nerve centre of St Petersburg's alternative art world. Set up five years ago by Timur Novikov, The New Academy has grown from what many initially thought was a poor joke into the city's dominant group.

Run on the basis of a pseudo-academic seat of learning, this rogue establishment sets out to "revive the traditions of beauty that Europe has abandoned". Its walls are decorated with enormous reproductions of lounging Greek Gods. "Professors" give classes in the Greek traditions and "humanist" artistic values and induct the "students" into the wider St Petersburg artistic world. The work they produce embodies the worst but beautiful aspects of Greek art. All chant

a curious mantra, entirely derived from Novikov's ideas and theories: "The New is always something old which has been forgotten," or "European art has been poisoned with Modernism".

A character of astonishing organisational energy, Novikov has been extremely prominent in the St Petersburg art world for the past 10 years. His work, now executed almost entirely on textiles, has been seen in major galleries in Paris, New York and Vienna. Provocatively opposed to the western position, Novikov's theories are a nationalist reappraisal of Russian art history, an attempt to counter the imperial cultural invasion of western Modernism and to redeem the classical tradition in all of its forms: "I am an ecologist," he says, crammed

behind the desk in his tiny office. "For me it is very important to preserve the culture which is about to perish."

Modernism, Novikov believes, is a deformed aberration, a new "Dark Age", a wrong turning from the true course of classically derived realist art, a form infected with "primitive, African, shamanistic" values. "Museums of modern art are monuments to the decline of modern culture," he says. Until the fall of communism, Russia "had been protected from the destructive machine of western culture by Socialist realism".

Novikov and his group believe that the decline of the Futurists was not caused by a brutal, political campaign but was a natural progression. The artistic repressions of Stalin are shrugged away. "Neither

Malevich nor Filonov nor Stepanova were imprisoned. The leaders of avant-garde art were not imprisoned. If Klutets was shot, it was because of his being connected with Latvian soldiers. If the Futurists were arrested it was not for being artists, it was for being close to party leaders who were discredited."

The conservationist instincts of the group also go beyond the borders of the former USSR, as far as German fascist art of the 1930s: "People try to say that classical art is Fascist," says Novikov, "but that's just because Hitler happened to like it." Recently, he has been trying to redeem Hitler's favourite sculptor, Arno Breker, from the scrapheap of history. In Berlin last year, the Galerie Bethanien cancelled one of his exhibitions because

they claimed it had fascist overtones. The launch recently of The Golden Age, a Neo-Academist project lavishly funded by The Soros Institute, confirmed their standing.

Developments at the Neo-Academy, disturbing though they might be, have been slow and relatively scrupulous. The rock club event, however, has pushed the situation to new levels of showmanship, irresponsibility and extremism. "From now on artists won't be wasting their time painting pictures," says Kuryokhin, "they will be doing much more important things."

He has been one of the driving forces of the avant-garde in St Petersburg for a decade. He has been seen in Britain a number of times with his band Pop Mechanics. His embrace, at the age of 41, of the schizophrenic National Bolsheviks, has taken everybody by surprise.

"We are looking for an entirely new conception of the nation which could meet the requirements of modern life," he says. "Fascism is one of the possible sources. We want to find the connection of the far right and the far left. It is when the most confirmed fascists are connected with the most confirmed communists." He adds: "I know it's dangerous. It's very

dangerous." Kuryokhin's saviour comes in the shape of Eduard Limonov, an ex-minister of the extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's shadow cabinet, now leader of the National Bolsheviks and guest star at the Rock Club. An ex-dissident writer who was forced to emigrate to New York by the Soviet authorities in 1974, he now believes that Russia has been in decline since March 5 1953, the date of Stalin's death.

The aesthetic that has grown up in St Petersburg is of particular interest to him: "This Neo-classicism captures the mood of the country. We feel here as if it is after the fall of the Roman Empire."

After a period of indulgence, St Petersburg's notoriously sluggish artistic circles are now trying to respond to the questions raised by this new wave of recidivism. That this is an aesthetic pursuit of beauty, a publicity prank, an intellectual stratagem designed to attract attention, an ideological fashion accessory is probably true, but it doesn't explain or excuse the choice of such volatile material.

All of these young artists are a product of Brezhnev-era laxity and the early Gorbachev years, of stagnation, prosperity and relative freedom. They hardly conform to the prevalent western picture of victims of a totalitarian system. But even for artists once persecuted by the system, the decay of the USSR came as a profound shock.

They are a generation who cannot work outside the rigid framework of intoxicating ideology. St Petersburg critic and artist Andre Chiboyan says, "Oppression is a kind of mental comfort. At least when the authorities were oppressing

you, you knew that you were important."

It seems that these radical avant-garde artists are ingeniously manoeuvring themselves back into their old familiar positions. They have synthetically created a situation which is analogous to the one they enjoyed before perestroika. Yet again they are fighting against conventional opinion — which, for the time being at least, still generally frowns on Fascism — and battling for the reinstatement of marginal values.

St Petersburg critic Alexander Kan, says: "They always want something hot, something controversial, something that will cause a scandal because that's their mode of being."

The reason why the strategy is generally successful is that it can easily be seen as part of a real and probably necessary process of cultural regeneration. Curators and historians are trying to meet the ruptures in Russian art history, trying to find an interpretation that does not involve the disposal of large tracts of the country's art. This shift culminated in last year's exhibition at the St Petersburg Russian Museum which attempted to "present it without any of the burden of history, to appreciate it just as an art form."

It is true, also, that the idea prevalent in the West of an entirely innocent movement snuffed out by Stalinism is something of an ideological distortion. After the Revolution, Mayakovsky advocated the ideological control of art, and wanted to establish "the dictatorship of taste". Pavel Filonov demands that the avant-garde should be looked upon as the only true artists. Many of the 1920s Futurists consorted with the government and involved themselves in vigorous, self-seeking power struggles. To some degree, they were to be destroyed by the system that they helped put in place.

However, this natural process of reassessment needs to be carefully handled and monitored. Something has obviously gone awry at the moment in St Petersburg. No matter how many portraits of Stalin are saved from the scrap heap, he was still responsible for the darkest period of Russia's history. Any worthwhile reinterpretation should be able to include the incontrovertible fact that repression of artists occurred.

It is difficult to gauge exactly how dangerous the St Petersburg developments actually are. While Eduard Limonov champions nefarious policies, his party is, at the moment, of minimal importance and it's not very likely that he'll elevate any St Petersburg artists to the position of national power. And any similarities with totalitarian strategies in the past are simply incidental. Television, not art, is the new ideological battleground.

The worst outcome of the Neo-Academist movement is that it has managed to dominate the contemporary scene with dull, dead-end and a stultifying, backward-looking aesthetic. It is a consequence of the vacuity of Neo-Academism that it has nowhere to go except deeper and deeper into dangerous ideological waters.

But Russian art, like Russian society, is in a period of transition. A little patience should produce results, both in the culture as well as in the political sphere. As Antonio Gramsci, in 1930, said of the previous infant Russian state: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."

Après moi la délugé - of biographies

French publishers are enjoying an unprecedented boom in books about the late President Mitterrand, reports ALEX DUVAL SMITH in Paris

THE JURY on the life and career of François Mitterrand is still out. The judgment of the people will be carried out in the bookshops where the titles are ringing a lucrative last salute.

Books on the former president arrive almost daily, far exceeding the number after General de Gaulle's death. The choice is dazzling. Mitterrand himself wrote 14 books, though only two are currently on sale because his estate has decided to opt for the drip-feed approach, rather like Disney does with animated classics.

But the decisive verdict will come as readers choose between a dozen other books, rushed out or republished since January 8, the 20th anniversary of the death of the former president. A good 20 more are expected in the next few weeks, including Mitterrand's unfinished memoirs and, from another publisher, those of his wife, Danielle.

Publishers are grateful to the book-loving president, who had the foresight to leave them a \$1 billion national library on the Left Bank and to double the shelf space of French public libraries.

But they admit to being

surprised by the bonanza he has inspired. "Mitterrand had the advantage of dying within a year of leaving office so he was still fresh in people's minds," said Bernard Lafont of Editions Félin.

To Olivier Orban of Seuil, publishers of a series of books by two investigative journalists, *La Décennie Mitterrand* (The Mitterrand Decade), the late socialist president was unique. "With Sartre we buried the last intellectual. With Mitterrand we have lost the last great statesman who linked us to painful chapters in our history."

The current number one bestseller is *La Mort Intime* (An Intimate Death), by Marie de Hennezel, a moving book about dying, with a foreword by the late president. In most of the titles, like Laurent Adler's *L'Année Des Adieux* (The Year of

Farewells), Mitterrand came up roses. Adler, a former adviser and talk-show presenter, is fifth in the bestseller list with her affectionate account of the last year at the Elysée Palace.

Pierre Péan, with *Une Jeunesse Française* (A French Youth), first published in September 1994, looks at Mitterrand's youth and his tangled relationship with the Vichy regime. The Guardian correspondent, Paul Webster, takes up the chronology, charting Mitterrand's talent for adapting his own past to fit his electoral ambitions in *L'Autre Histoire* (The Real Story).

Then there are the would-be shockers, some of which contain startling revelations and others which,

despite their merits, belong in the revenge section. *Les Ombres du Président* (The President's Ears), by Jean-Marie Pontant and Jérôme Dupuis, makes Watergate look like a child's game of walkie-talkies. It reveals that the late socialist president ran a mini-Stasi secret police, bugging of more than 2,000 friends and enemies between 1982 and 1986. This resulted in intimidation and may be linked to the mysterious suicides which plagued his reign.

Jean-Edern Halier, who was bugged, did not kill himself. But his bitter book, *L'Honneur Perdu de François Mitterrand* (The Lost Honour ...)

professional amounts to the novel and former Mitterrand supporter was passed over for culture minister in favour of Jack Lang.

He wrote his book in 1982 but the Elysée kept it out of bookshops by launching tax raids on potential publishers and a press campaign to discredit him. His revelations, like the existence of Mazarine, Mitterrand's daughter by his mistress, are no longer new.

Michel Gubler has also killed his chances of continuing his career as a doctor with *Le Grand Secret*, about Mitterrand's decision to make his cancer a state secret after it was diagnosed in 1981. The book was published, sold out and banned within days of Mitterrand's death on January 8. It can now be found on the Internet at a server called <http://www.leweb.fr/secret/pogel.html>.

Few are able to predict what the lasting memory of Mitterrand will be. Certainly, he will be remembered as "un grand séducteur", a compliment in many eyes but a measure of dishonesty in others.

France was duped by Mitterrand but it does not want to cast itself in the role of the vulture pecking at the entrails of a rotten corpse. "The country has created a presidential monarchy so

that it may continue to have heroes. Mitterrand, despite having skeletons in his closet, fulfilled that role by staying one step ahead of the game.

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Mercer Ellington

Sad notes in the shadow of Duke

MERCER Ellington, who has died aged 76, was for much of his life a band leader without a band and a trumpeter who never took solos. His chances of stardom shrivelled in the shadow of his father, Duke Ellington, who, with his prodigious musical intellect, sophistication and vanity was a hard act to follow. In a 1976 biography, Mercer wrote of the difficult relationship, pulling no punches. He also revealed the increasingly important part he played in the great composer's latter campaign...

By 1965, Duke needed a reliable road manager. Twice before Mercer had managed a band for his father's former trumpet star, Cootie Williams, while doubling in his trumpet section. Now Williams, who had returned to the ducal fold, reminded the leader of his son's capabilities. Mercer inherited an often unruly band of individualists, petted and rarely scolded by a leader who sometimes placed himself in indulgent loco parentis. To be "strawboss" of such an organisation was not an enviable task and he made enemies. The collectiveness seen from the audience was far from the backstage reality. Precedence games abounded: some senior members vied for the privilege of being last on the stand and Mercer was obliged to be firm. Taking his place in the trumpet section afterwards took some guts.



Hitting the road again... Mercer Ellington, a musician whose chances of stardom shrivelled. PHOTOGRAPH BY VAL WILMER

Bob Shaw

Sci-fi through a kind eye

WHEN authors die they tend to become their works. Sooner or later, Bob Shaw, who has died aged 64, will turn into the 30 booties of science fiction he wrote over the 30 years of his career. But it will be hard to remember him this way. Within sci-fi authors who are disliked are disliked in person. Those who knew Shaw — and many hundreds of his readers had met him and drank with him — loved him. He never said a cruel word. He was extremely funny, deeply kind, visibly decent. He was too much loved to fade easily.

Weekend Birthdays



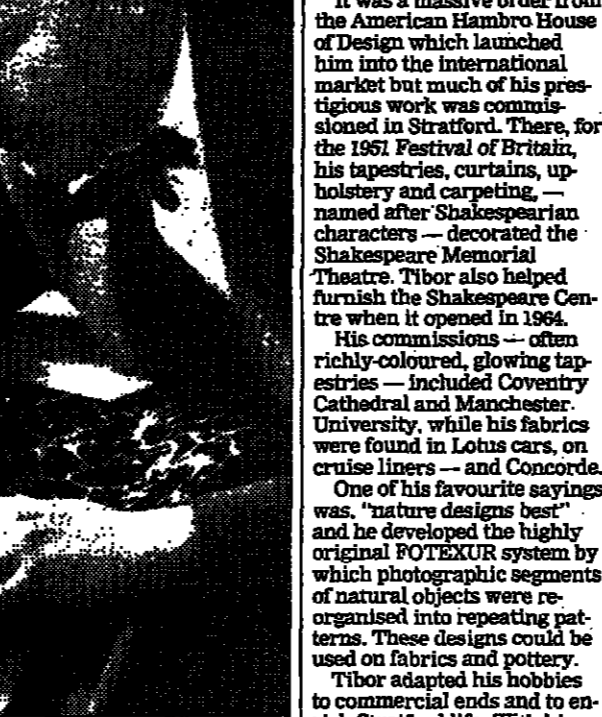
WHICH crime novelist loathes milk and detests meat ("I won't go into butchers' shops. I find them quite nauseous")? Has been in a police station only once in the last 30 years "and that was when I was being done for excessive speed on the A14"? Is addicted to the love and lure of the London Underground? Answer: Ruth Rendell. 66 today. Rendell, the "poor millionaire" who plans the Inspector Wexford books with the calmly infuriating technique of working the whole thing out and then changing the murderer in the last chapter — "If I can deceive myself, I can deceive the readers." Rendell of the intense stare, who thinks that on the whole life isn't very happy and produces those noir psychological novels lectured inside the heads of suburban monsters. Rendell of the even and regular writing routine, two books a year, 2,500 words and a four-mile walk every day, with rest in the Gothic extremities of her Barbican vine titles, Rendell the Anglican socialist who used to believe nuclear Armageddon might arrive in her lifetime. Rendell the repeatedly interviewed — "I've been asked every possible question" — yet completely unexpected: "I love moving house. I love to ride in the furniture van or at least behind it." VR

Buddy de Franco, jazz clarinetist, 73; Frumella Gee, actress, 46; Fay Godwin, landscape photographer, 65; Bernie Grant, Labour MP, 62; Dong Hoyle, Labour MP, 66; Barry Humphries, entertainer, 82; Sir Gordon Jones, chairman, Yorkshire Water, 69; Linda Kitson, war artist and teacher, 51; Andrew Leigh, general manager, Old Vic, 55; Julia McKenzie, actress, singer, 55; Prof Claire Falley, jurist, human rights campaigner, 65; Gene Finney, singer, 55; Patricia Routledge, actress, 67; Michael Shersby, Conservative MP, 65; Lord Slynn of Hadleigh, judge, European Court of Justice, 66; Comdt Mary Talbot, former director, Women's Royal Naval Service, 74.

Tomorrow's birthdays

Rob Andrew, rugby footballer, 33; James Bredin, television archivist, 72; Helen Gurley Brown, author and magazine editor, 74; Michael Buerk, foreign correspondent and television newscaster, 61; Phyllis Galvert, actress, 81; Sinead Cusack, actress, 48; Phillip DeFreitas, cricketer, 30; Len Deighton, novelist, 67; Milos Forman, film director, 64; Sir Eric Gairy, former prime minister of Grenada, 74; Graeme Garden, comic actor, scriptwriter, 63; Tessa Hilton, editor, Sunday Mirror, 45; Russell Hunter, actor, 71; Colin Jackson, athlete, 29; Pru Leith, restaurateur, cookery writer, 58; Yoko Ono Lennon, conceptual artist and singer, 63; Peter Luff, Conservative MP, 41; James MacGibbon, publisher, yachtswoman, 84; Toni Morrison, American novelist, Nobel laureate, 65; Jack Palance, actor, 78; Swraj Paul, entrepreneur, chairman, Caparo Group, 65; Bobby Robson, former England football manager, 63; Greta Scacchi, actress, 36; Cull Shipton, actress, 46; Ned Sherrin, broadcaster, 65; John Travolta, actor, 42; Lt-Gen Sir John Wisley, Commander-in-Chief, UK Land Forces, 57.

Designer with a G-Plan



Designer with a G-Plan... Tibor Reich working on his FOTEXUR system

Tibor Reich Artist's Avon calling

TIBOR REICH, who has died aged 78, was one of the most innovative post-war textile designers and an immensely talented ceramicist, photographer and graphic artist. It was Tibor who worked on the G-Plan and Ercol furniture, which epitomised fifties and sixties design. Born in Hungary, his love of colour developed out of the Hungarian countryside and by handling the bright reds and ribbons produced by his textile manufacturer father. A sense of design came from childhood visits to Europe's art galleries. Tibor studied textile design and technology in Vienna, where the ideas of the Vienna Werkstatte and the Welmar Bauhaus created the climate in which he developed.

Toby Neuburg

Past master

TOBY NEUBURG, who has died aged 71, was an outstanding scholar and a superb teacher, across a spectrum which encompassed primary schoolchildren and postgraduates. His studies on Mayhew and Dickens, A History of Chappin Literature and Penny Histories, and The History Hunter — a book for children — established him as a literary critic and social historian. War service in the Gloucester Regiment kindled an affection for the private soldier, which led to two more books, The Western Front and Gone For A Soldier. He was writing on a history of the "other ranks" just before his death and had become review editor of the Journal of Army Historical Research. Toby was born in Steyning, Sussex, the son of poet and lithographer Victor Benjamin Neuburg. After the war he ended up in Germany as a sergeant-instructor in the Army Educational Corps. Then came Goldsmiths College, London, and teaching, reviewing and writing. Toby was a committed socialist who eschewed dogma and helped people, especially the young. And there are generations of students, both here and in the US, who were turned on by those stimulating lectures and tutorials. He leaves his wife Anne, his daughter and son-in-law and two granddaughters.

Another Day

February 17, 1978: Roy and Jennifer Jenkins and Paul Chasmon and his wife came to lunch. Talk about Mrs Thatcher being Shadow Conservative Leader. Also about Dick Crossman's funeral. I told malicious stories about Dick at Oxford, remembering all the time that I was doing so, a reading party at Crickington Manor when I had a slight "affair" with Dick which was compounded of passion and lust on both sides... All these memories are now outweighed though by the news that Dick's only son Patrick, aged 17, has hanged himself. In the announcement they seem to have connected his death with some remarks in the extracts from Crossman's journals published in the Sunday Times... which were reflections on his reasons for giving his son public education at a comprehensive, rather than the private education at Winchester, which Dick himself liked. Talk about Mrs Thatcher being Shadow Conservative Leader. Also about Dick Crossman's funeral. I told malicious stories about Dick at Oxford, remembering all the time that I was doing so, a reading party at Crickington Manor when I had a slight "affair" with Dick which was compounded of passion and lust on both sides... All these memories are now outweighed though by the news that Dick's only son Patrick, aged 17, has hanged himself. In the announcement they seem to have connected his death with some remarks in the extracts from Crossman's journals published in the Sunday Times... which were reflections on his reasons for giving his son public education at a comprehensive, rather than the private education at Winchester, which Dick himself liked.

Face to Faith

The sustenance in fasting

Fasad Nahdi

IT IS difficult to explain the Muslim fast of Ramadan, which ends this week, to the modern, self-indulgent mind. As a ritual, fasting is as old as religion itself. According to ancient practices of Hinduism, certain days of the year were set aside for fasting by women and others for men. In our day, the Brahmin caste in India still observes a complete abstinence from food and drink on the 11th and 12th days of every Hindu month.

into Jerusalem. Moses fasted for a similar period before he went up the mountain. The early Christians, most of whom observed the Mosaic fast, also fasted on the Day of Atonement. But as history rolled on the Lenten fast assumed a largely symbolic role, involving an abstinence from certain types of food only. When Islam appeared, its scripture acknowledged and continued the ancient practice of fasting. The Koran taught the early Muslims to fast on any day but stated that as a minimum they were to observe the month-long fast of Ramadan. Later on, religious authors spoke of three grades of fasting: first, the "Outward fast", where one abstains from food, drink and sex; second, the fast of the senses and the tongue, whereby one avoids looking at or hearing anything which might turn the attention to material things, and where the fasting person keeps

from backbiting and hostile language; and third, the highest grade, the "fast of the soul", where the above practices are perfected by an abstinence from any thought which might impair one's awareness of God's presence. The principle of fasting is related to that of recognising limitations. Without this, knowledge is impossible, for it is when we come to the end or limit of a thing that its true nature becomes evident. Ramadan imposes a clear limit to indulgence, offering an unmistakable spiritual lesson. It also constitutes a purification and a sacrifice, which, like the pruning of trees, leads to renewal and fresh strength. On the moral plane it also brings a direct understanding of the suffering of the hungry.

and the world. No longer are they constantly absorbing sustenance from their surroundings. One of the effects of this is to compel them to realise their total dependence upon God and drink, so that they fervently thank their Creator for His unflinching provision of their daily needs. This sense of detachment from the world is a powerful symbol, bringing about in the mind and the heart that appreciation of distance which is one of the states most cherished by spiritual seekers everywhere. When fasting, the Muslim acts with a new sense of confidence, able more fully to concentrate his attention on his material as well as spiritual life and to devote himself more fully to the One who is the source of all his sustenance. Most important, Ramadan is revered as the most blessed month of the year, the month in which the Koran was revealed to Muhammad, God's final Prophet on this earth. It is a time of grace and spiritual energy, when the acts of worship practised throughout the year suddenly take on a new and urgent meaning. Towards the close of this month comes the

Night of Rank, the Laylat al-Qadr, which, as the Koran relates, is "better than a thousand months". According to our ancestors, the Night of Rank and the whole of Ramadan is a most sublime divine gift granted by the Lord to his beloved Prophet and his Nation. As one scholar has written, those who spend the Night of Rank in religious observance or *ibadah* — such as caring for the sick, al-

derly and bereaved and giving comfort to orphans and widows — it will be as if he had done so for a thousand months, namely 83 years and four months. Preceded by almost an entire month of fasting and prayer, this night is marked by climactic devotion to prayer and reciting the Koran. The Blessed Prophet stressed that it is a time for spiritual effort and breakthrough; and accord-

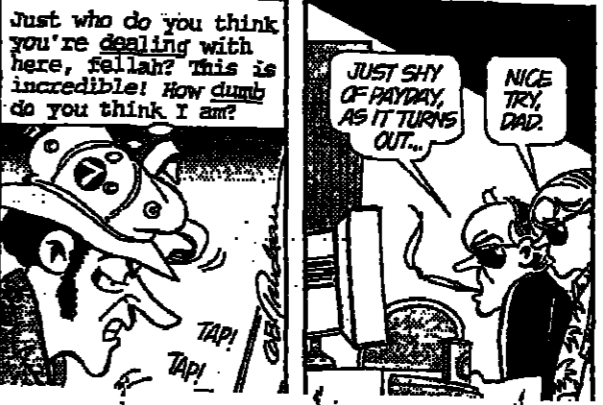
ing to tradition it was the night when God proclaimed man's status as His deputy on the earth, thereby raising him above all other creatures. It is the moment when man most consummately becomes himself. Ramadan is traditionally the time of reconciliation, of love and forgiveness, as well as of spiritual ascent. It purifies the soul and effects whole communities of the misdeeds

and misunderstandings of the past year and acts as a powerful energy for reform. When the month is over and the season of thanksgiving begins, the Muslim may face the future with new determination and strength, repentant of former bad habits and resolute that he will never return to them. Fasad Nahdi is editor of O-News, The Muslim Weekly.

Doonesbury



BY GARRY TRUDEAU



MoneyGuardian

Government defeat keeps thousands off the street

Teresa Hunter

HUNDREDS of thousands of victims of bureaucratic bungling may have escaped the threat of repossession following a landmark defeat of the Government in the High Court.

A judge has ruled that Secretary of State for Social Security Peter Lilley acted unlawfully in clawing back overpaid mortgage interest from a man who takes care of his disabled wife.

The judgment will prove deeply embarrassing to a Government intent on cutting back on DSS administration staff. The ruling, by Mr Justice Brooke, was part of a judicial review of the case of Michael Golding, from west Wales, who receives a care allowance for looking after his disabled wife. Mortgage interest is also paid by the DSS.

His mortgage had always been kept up to date until 1992, when the DSS began making interest payments direct to mortgage lenders following an agreement with the Council for Mortgage Lenders.

But the DSS failed to reduce the interest paid on Mr Golding's behalf as rates fell — and he was not alone in this. Almost two years ago the Money Advice Association warned that at least 100,000 families were threatened by repossession because of DSS errors, and some had already lost their homes.

Mr Golding's solicitor, Duncan Forbes, said yesterday: "This judgment means that the Government has acted unlawfully in tens of thousands of cases where overpayments of mortgage interest have been recouped from benefit claimants. Many people have lost their homes as a result. Thousands of claimants may be entitled to reimbursement and even compensation."

A spokesman for the Halifax Building Society said the

problem arose because the DSS would not accept instructions from the lender. But borrowers were unaware they had a duty to notify the lender of rate changes. Mr Golding said: "We did receive a DSS letter saying that payments would fluctuate but that it would all be sorted out at the end of the year."

The Goldings had to meet a small part of the monthly mortgage repayment from their own pockets, and they adjusted their contribution after taking the DSS payment into account. This meant they were unwittingly failing to meet their share of the monthly repayments. The mistake was not discovered for nearly two years, by which time the overpayment had ballooned to £1,366. The Goldings merely received a letter

'They are already living on the breadline. Clawbacks push them well below poverty levels'

notifying them that their repayment would be changed. Only when the lender, National & Provincial, began repossession proceedings did the Goldings realise that the DSS had stopped making all payments, and they were now four months in arrears. Furthermore, the society had slapped a £300 arrears fee on the debt and threatened further charges.

With the help of the Disabled Law Society, Mr Golding took the case to judicial review, arguing that the Secretary of State had overstepped his powers when he stopped paying the mortgage interest. Mr Justice Brooke agreed, but the issue of com-

penation was unresolved as the DSS immediately signalled its intention to appeal.

Chris Pond, of the Low Pay Unit, said: "These errors have a devastating impact on the lives of the victims. They are already living on the breadline. Clawbacks push them well below poverty levels."

The only way Mr Golding could find the £40 monthly N&P required to clear the arrears was to cancel the lease on his wife's car. This caused real hardship and left them without any transport.

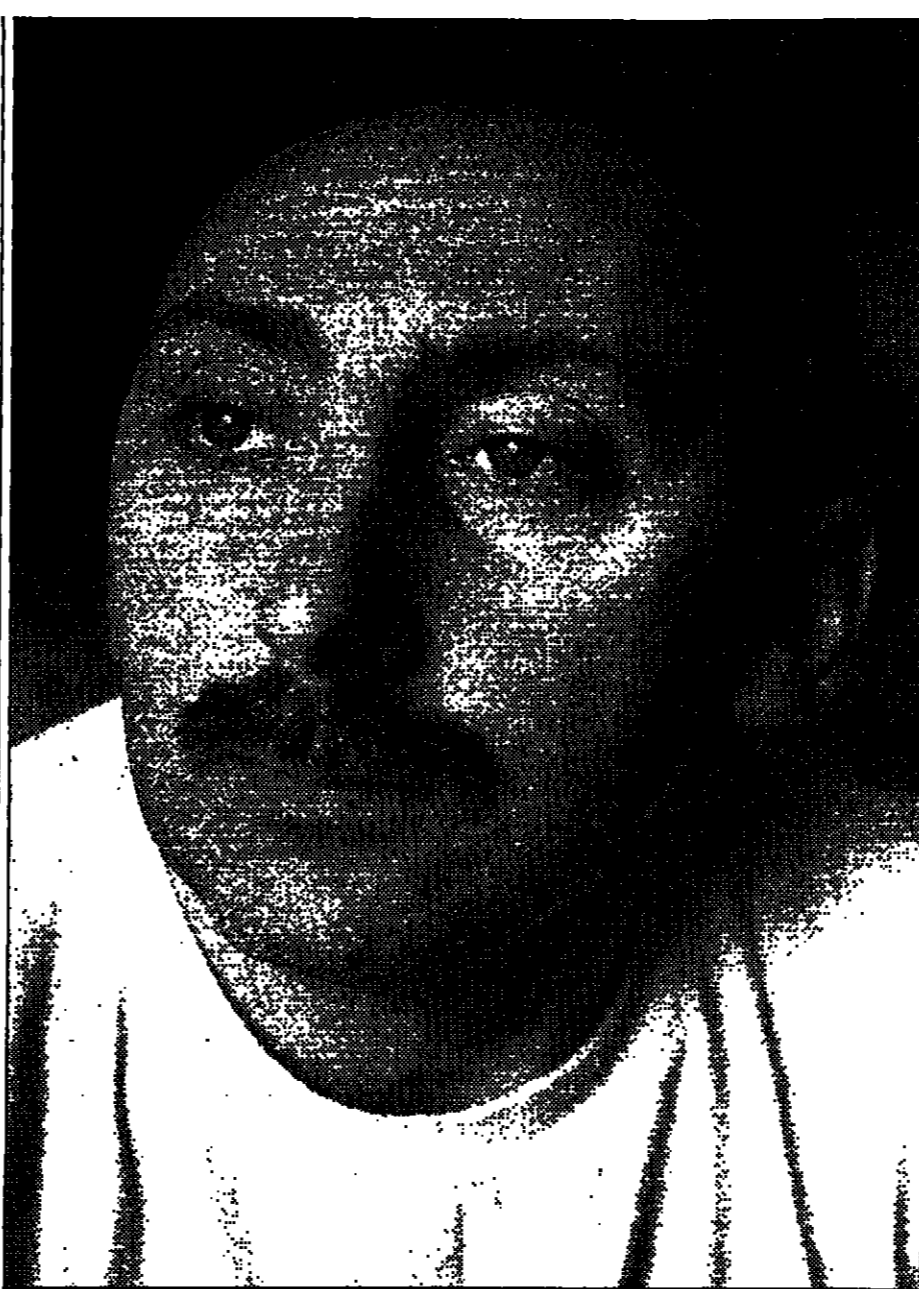
But mistakes on mortgage interest are just the tip of the benefits errors iceberg. More than 12,000 widows have been told their pensions will be cut by around a third because the DSS miscalculated the state earnings related element of their husbands' pensions.

Elsewhere, more than 35,000 severely disabled people failed to get benefits to buy medical care because the benefits agency staff failed to consider them for the award. Father-of-two Barry Briggs recently won a battle with the DSS after his invalidity benefit was overpaid for a year.

Mr Briggs, of Cadishead, Salford, has been unable to work since an industrial accident in 1991, when his right hand was damaged. When his girlfriend returned to work after having a baby, Mr Briggs, who is unable to read or write, told the DSS that she was working, and she wrote to them. However, the benefits were not adjusted for a year, when the DSS began to claw back the overpayment.

Mr Briggs appealed but the DSS delayed tribunal hearings. Officials claimed that nobody had notified them that his girlfriend was no longer a dependant. But this was rejected by the tribunal, which decided that Mr Briggs was a credible witness, and accepted his evidence.

Money Guardian is edited by Margaret Hughes



Benefit and the doubt... Disabled Barry Briggs fought off DSS PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS THOMOND

Gloomy forecast on house prices but hope for rates

Nick Pandya

HOPES that the housing market is set for recovery this year have been dashed by the boss of one of Britain's biggest mortgage lenders.

Cheltenham & Gloucester chief executive Andrew Longhurst said there were no signs of any improvement in confidence, and he expected the number of transactions to remain broadly in line with last year's figure.

But he brought borrowers some good news with a prediction that mortgage rates would continue to fall throughout the year following a combination of lower interest rates and the growing mortgage price war.

In an effort to continue increasing its share of the mortgage market, Lloyds-owned C&G has launched a series of new fixed-rate mortgages without early redemption penalties. Fixed-rate mortgages typically charge borrowers between three and six months' interest if they surrender early.

The bank offers a two-year fixed-rate home loan at 5.99 per cent and another at 6.99 per cent fixed for three years. The bank has a five-year deal fixed at 7.99 per cent. There are no valuation fees or mortgage indemnity premiums to pay. However, it will cost borrowers a £500 non-refundable reservation charge to find out if they have been allocated a mortgage.

New borrowers will need a down-payment of 10 per cent of the value of the house. Existing Lloyds Bank or Cheltenham & Gloucester borrowers pay the usual 5 per cent deposit.

National & Provincial offers mortgages fixed at 2.65 per cent for a year and at 5.15 per cent fixed for two years. For house buyers who prefer constant repayments for the next five years, the society has a deal fixed at 7.49 per cent. Cash-strapped buyers can

opt for the society's penny mortgage, whereby monthly repayments are charged at a penny for the first six months and the valuation of the property is free. Thereafter the mortgage reverts to its standard variable rate. Those buyers who prefer to borrow at its current variable rate of 7.54 per cent can opt for its cash-back deal, whereby it will reimburse up to £7,500 or 5.2 per cent of the value of the loan.

Bristol & West has come up with a home loan at 0.95 per cent fixed until January 31, 1997, and another two-year deal whereby borrowers pay 3.99 per cent in the first year and 5.99 per cent in the second year. Alternatively, the lender has a fixed-rate deal stretching to February 28, 2001, at 6.99 per cent.

Insurance giant General Accident has launched a fixed-rate mortgage at 5.99 per cent until March 1, 1998. Rival insurer Legal & General offers a variable rate mortgage at 6.49 per cent (APR 6.7) and its Flexible Reserve Mortgage at 6.59 per cent (APR 6.8), whereby borrowers make additional payments against their mortgage account whenever circumstances allow a reduction in the term of the mortgage.

Bank of Scotland has launched a flexible package through its direct mortgage business. Borrowers have the option either to over-pay or under-pay their monthly repayments. Additionally, the scheme has a facility to break off mortgage repayments for up to six months, provided the unpaid amount is no more than 5 per cent of the value of the mortgage.

Lambeth Building Society is offering loyal existing borrowers a 0.5 per cent discount off its current rate of 7.49 per cent if they remortgage with the society.

Elsewhere, financial adviser Barry Birch & Noble has produced a guide to mortgages available free by calling 0181-776-1287, or 0131-225-2122 for house buyers in Scotland.

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Analysts doubt that pest control group's initial hostile offer will be enough to persuade shareholders



High hopes... despite BET's response, Rentokil chief executive Clive Thompson is still looking for a deal

BET derides Rentokil bid

Roger Cowe

WAR broke out yesterday between BET and Rentokil when the distribution and industrial services group rejected the "wholly inadequate offer" from Rentokil as it launched a hostile takeover bid valuing BET at £1.8 billion.

The BET chairman, Sir Christopher Harding, criticised the haste of Rentokil — which covers pest control to

plant care — in going public on the offer less than 24 hours after first making an approach with a view to an agreed merger.

"A hurried announcement of a hostile and inadequate offer for BET, following a drop yesterday of over 7 per cent in Rentokil's share price, reveals Rentokil's lack of confidence in being able to put forward a credible proposal," Sir Michael said.

But Rentokil's chief executive, Clive Thompson, said he had responded to what he perceived as BET's unfriendly

reaction on Thursday, but still hoped that an agreed deal might be possible.

BET's shares rose by 10.5p on Wednesday and leapt by a further 34.5p when firm news of the bid approach emerged. Yesterday the share price added another 11p to 186½p, bringing the total increase this week to 42 per cent.

Rentokil's shares, on the other hand, fell a further 3.5p yesterday, taking the total decline since Tuesday night to 34p or 9 per cent as investors worried about the company being forced to pay too much.

City opinion last night was that Rentokil's initial offer, equivalent to about 190p per share, would not be enough to win over shareholders, although BET is seen as facing a tough battle to stave off the strategy and management record of the predator.

Rentokil has achieved its target of 20 per cent growth in earnings per share for each of the past 10 years, and it reported yesterday that the record had been maintained in 1995.

Earnings last year grew by 21 per cent, with pre-tax prof-

its reaching £214 million on sales of £860 million, up by 17 per cent.

The 20 per cent target is widely seen as a milestone around Mr Thompson's neck, and some view the BET bid as a desperate act to keep hitting the target. "It's a question of who needs whom most," one City source said.

Mr Thompson said Rentokil did not need BET, but its intervention could save the target's businesses. "We are deeply concerned that the quality of the businesses is now beginning to be destroyed," he said.

He cited the 20 per cent earnings growth record as proof of the company's strong management. In contrast to BET, which he said had struggled to recover from a collapse at the beginning of the decade and had no coherent strategy for growth.

But BET's chief executive, John Clark, said he had delivered what he promised when he was appointed in 1991 to rescue the company. "I said it would take three years and that growth would not come through until the second year after that."

Saturday Notebook

Black horse races ahead with retail



Alex Brummer

THERE is really not much point in comparing the Lloyds TSB Group performance in 1995 with the year before, or looking at Lloyds for great pointers to the rest of the banking sector. Having lost out in the battle for corporate banking business, when it failed to win control of Midland in 1992, Lloyds has taken an entirely different route seeking to become a dominant financial services provider.

In the process, it has swallowed one premium business, in the shape of Cheltenham & Gloucester, and the more problematical and down market TSB. Melding the three cultures will be as difficult a task for chief executive Sir Brian Pitsman as was steering Lloyds through the pitfalls of the last recession.

The lower pre-tax profits figure of £1.7 billion should not be taken too seriously. By restructuring now, Lloyds TSB aims to reach £250 million per year out of the cost of the merged group, which will assist in rebuilding retained profits and capital ratios which have come down sharply following the mergers.

What ought to be encouraging for investors over the longer haul is that the major growth in the group, in all its manifestations in 1995, was in retail financial services, which has chosen as its favoured sector. Everything else, including wholesale banking, looked fairly pedestrian. A fall-off in dealing activity made private banking less lucrative and although Lloyds has done well in Brazil in 1995, the windfall benefits of writing back Latin American provisions come in much smaller at £50 million against £28 million in 1994.

The real opportunities for Lloyds in 1996 and beyond are going to be in the retail sector. The mortgage market, in which it is now the third largest player with 9 per cent, will be tough, with traditional building societies exerting downward pressure on margins in an effort to remain afloat. Moreover, suspicion is still afoot in the personal pensions sector as a result of the mis-selling which required further Lloyds TSB provisions.

However, 1996 is a year in which Britain will be flush with cash as a result of windfalls from electricity rebates, building society conversions and Tessa. It should be a good market for the Lloyds franchise in savings products.

PSBR in the current 1995-96 fiscal year has been the surprise. When first forecast in the 1994 Budget it was expected to come in at £21.5 billion. By the time of last November's Budget this figure had rocketed to £29 billion. Given the January 1996 figures, just released, the outcome is likely to be even worse.

The first four weeks of the year are particularly important because of the starting point for corporation tax payments. This year this has produced a £3.7 billion net borrowing reduction for the Treasury, which at first looks rather impressive. However, this figure compares to £3.1 billion in the same month last year and when privatisation receipts are included the improvement is even smaller.

Ten months into the financial year, the PSBR is just a billion or so better than last year (including privatisation receipts). Total receipts for the year so far are down on the Treasury's expectations, largely as a result of cutbacks on both taxes and excise duties. As a result, most analysts are now predicting that the PSBR could come in at about £33 billion, even if there are more privatisation receipts before year end. All of this means that the starting point for 1996-97, when the PSBR target is £22.5 billion, is that much higher.

The Treasury's calculations are based on the assumption that growth of 3 per cent will bail out the public finances. This is a very optimistic assumption. The Treasury may be kicking-starting the prospects for growth remain limited as a result of sluggishness in key European markets. With elections looming, the Chancellor will doubtless throw caution to the wind in the next Budget. But should remember that nervousness in the bond markets could curtail his room to manoeuvre.

Share-dealing shake-up puts jobs at risk

Big City brokers are opting for radical change. Patrick Donovan reports

THOUSANDS of market-making jobs throughout the City appear to be under threat as pressure grows for the Stock Exchange to switch to order-driven trading.

The City's most powerful brokers have decided that London must abandon its traditional quote-driven dealing rooms and switch to an order-driven system.

The biggest City shake-up since Big Bang was looming as more than 90 institutions rushed to submit their representations to meet today's deadline for the exchange's consultative process over market reform.

The exchange plans to provoke a general debate by giving public access to the representations submitted over the next few days.

The soundings come at a sensitive time for the Stock Exchange, which has seen its reputation badly dented by its ousting of former chief executive Michael Lawrence.

The issue of the Stock Exchange's future will be in the political spotlight next week as its chairman, John Kemp-Walsh, appears before the Treasury select committee.

He will be the first senior exchange figure to give evidence to the all-party group of MPs' investigation into the future of the London markets.

The exchange, which has been reviewing how the City should restructure its trading systems to help it meet growing mainland European competition, had requested all City firms to put in representations.

It asked them whether the markets should continue with its quote-driven system, which relies on prices being flagged on an electronic bulletin board.

The other option would be for deals to be carried out through order-driven systems, whereby the size of share stakes is posted on dealing screens. This method is widely used on almost all rival European bourses.

The third option is a hybrid, combining both dealing mechanisms.

It has emerged that the City's most powerful brokers regard a switch to order-driven as inevitable. They urge, however, that separate arrangements must be made for large "block deals".

This would result in huge job losses because City dealing rooms would no longer need to employ the highly paid market-makers, who set the prices at which brokers are prepared to buy or sell shares.

Institutions and fund managers appear to be less confident, with several key players yesterday claiming that the Stock Exchange was rushing the consultative programme.

"There is no chance of being able to agree all this in the time available," one said.

The Stock Exchange has said that it wants the new-style dealing system in place by August.

Unichem's £617m trumps Gehe

Ian King

THE battle for control of Lloyds Chemists escalated yesterday when Unichem trumped Gehe's £594 million bid and the German drugs distributor immediately threatened to come back with an even higher offer.

Unichem, which opened the bidding for Lloyds three weeks ago with a £238 million agreed offer, raised its bid to £517 million and insisted it had "overwhelming" support for the deal from customers and shareholders.

But Gehe, which last year

snapped up British drugs distribution group AAH after an acrimonious bid battle, immediately said it would "consider" raising its offer.

News of the raised bid, which Unichem said was final, sent Lloyds shares up 23p to 495p, suggesting that the market expects a higher offer. Unichem shares finished 8½p higher at 247½p, valuing its cash-and-paper offer for Lloyds at 489p.

Gehe's offer currently stands at 460p. Analysts believe it must bid 500p to be sure of delivering a knock-out.

Announcing the raised offer, and ending days of speculation, Unichem chief executive

Jeff Harris said he was confident of winning.

He said: "We have spent several months planning this deal, and I think it's a hell of a good one."

"The commercial arguments remain compelling, and our focus on the achievement of immediate cost savings offers the prospect of significant growth."

Mr Harris said the fact that Unichem was offering a mixture of cash and shares, rather than pure cash as Gehe has done so far, did not seem to be a problem.

He said: "The feedback we've had from Lloyds shareholders suggests that it's our

paper that attracts them. It's been very encouraging."

Last night, Gehe's chief executive, Dieter Kammerer, was understood to be back in Germany, where he will decide whether to raise the bid further. Company sources insisted, however, that Gehe was "in it to win it", rather than simply trying to force Unichem to pay a higher price for Lloyds, as has been suggested in some quarters.

Meanwhile, the European Commission said it was launching a preliminary enquiry into Gehe's offer for Lloyds, on the grounds that it might contravene its competition policy.

Chemist clash

CAUGHT in the current rash of takeover bids, the fight for Lloyds Chemists has almost certainly reached less attention than it deserves. By all accounts the latest offer from the UK contender Unichem of cash and shares worth £617.3 million, will be topped by German rival Gehe AG which is depending on its greater cash resources to secure victory.

But before the institutions do the usual thing and pocket the money, there are some wider considerations. Firstly, Gehe, if it were successful, could be expected to use its enormous buying power to take up the challenge begun by Asda's price cutting. That is great for the consumer in the short term; but longer term, it could be disastrous for the family chemist — an essential link in the chain of community healthcare.

Secondly, while it remains acceptable for German companies to take advantage of Anglo-Saxon capitalists by swooping on their UK counterparts, our own successful retailers do not enjoy the same luxury. Boots has long wanted to take its very successful formula into Europe, but has found itself stymied by price regulation and by the web of continental shareholdings.

One cannot blame Lloyds' outsider-shareholder for wanting to take the cash and run. But in this case, there is a clear divergence between the interests of the larger shareholders and the public interest.

PSBR set to surge above target

Larry Elliott Economics Editor

THE City was predicting last night that Government borrowing will surge above £80 billion this year after the latest figures on the state's finances showed a smaller-than-expected surplus in January.

Despite the normal bumper harvest from corporation tax receipts last month, analysts were sceptical about the prospects of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement meeting the Chancellor's £29 billion Budget forecast.

According to data released

jointly by the Treasury and the Central Statistical Office, the Government ran a surplus of £3.7 billion last month, but this was less than the £4.5 billion anticipated by the City.

Mr Clarke has twice increased his prediction for the size of the PSBR, but economists said it would take an improbably large improvement in borrowing in the final two months for the 1995-96 PSBR to come in below £30 billion.

Although the last Budget before the election is still nine months away, this year's PSBR will have a direct impact on the prospects of big tax

cuts. If it proves to be well in excess of the Chancellor's estimates, there will be a diminished prospect of achieving the £22.4 billion target for 1996-97 financial year.

The January PSBR figures and a downward revision of December's deficit reduced the cumulative deficit for the first 10 months of the 1995-96 financial year to £19.7 billion.

However, the last two months of the year traditionally witness a surge in spending by government departments keen to spend every last penny in their budgets.

Adam Cole, economist with James Capel, described last month's data as disappointing. He added that, with tax receipts coming in slightly lower than expected in the Budget and spending higher, the PSBR was on course to be £32 billion this year.

Despite the recent pick-up in consumer spending, VAT receipts have been particularly depressed. According to analysts, this suggests that buying has tended to be strongest in areas such as food, which do not attract VAT.

Andrew Smith, the shadow chief secretary, thought the figures reflected economic weakness, not strength. He said: "It is a consequence of Tory economic failure that public borrowing is so high."

Tax famine

AFTER a dream week for the Budget, Kenneth Clarke, it was inevitable something would eventually go wrong. Of all government data, the public sector borrowing requirement is the most difficult to predict because of the uneven pattern of tax receipts and the tendency of government departments to spend up to the hilt in the final months of the year.

Yet, the PSBR is central to the Government's hopes, with John Major relying on tax cuts to propel him back to Downing Street in 1997. The extraordinary thing about the

RBS targets Charles Church

Tony May

THE Royal Bank of Scotland took the unusual step yesterday of making a formal bid for the Surrey-based house-builder Charles Church, which collapsed in 1991. It is controlled by a consortium of 10 banks and has debts of £40.5 million.

RBS is paying £22.6 million for Church and will buy the remaining debt from other shareholders for £12.8 million.

The Bank said the bid was seen as the best way of recovering its £11.5 million debt. It was forced to make a formal bid as Church was a quoted company before it went under.

Church builds quality houses in the South-east of England, and in the year to

August 31 it raised its operating profit from £1.3 million to £4.1 million. It completed 192 homes and had 15 sites under development.

Derek Sach, director of group risk at RBS, said Church was one of the leading companies in its sector and had held its reputation despite problems in the industry. He said his group had a high regard for the management team and was believe that by having one supportive owner, the management will be able to focus on its developing business.

Stewart Baseley, Church's chief executive, said his group "has performed well since being restructured in 1991 and will now be well placed to take advantage of the expected upturn in the housing market."

Sweb Gas suspends its doorstep sales campaign

Chris Barrie

THE gas division of South Western Electricity, at the centre of a trading standards investigation, yesterday suspended its doorstep sales campaign amid allegations by Labour that the Government had ignored warnings that consumers would be vulnerable to pressurised sales techniques.

Labour consumer affairs spokesman Nigel Griffiths said events showed industry and energy minister Tim Eggar's "undertakings to the House of Commons that consumers would not be exploited are worthless. This is just one of the pitfalls of a gas free-for-all."

Mr Griffiths also condemned Ms Clare Spottiswoode and her officials from industry regulator Ofgas for "laughable supervision" of the trials which foreshadowed full competition in the supply of gas to households.

Ofgas said last night that the implementation of fair trading standards was not part of its responsibilities.

The trials are supposed to start on April 1 and cover a

region populated by 500,000 gas consumers. Ten companies are wooing customers with hefty discounts.

Sweb Gas managing director Ron Whitley admitted he was "devastated" by allegations that the company was pressuring consumers to sign contracts on the basis of false information. The Gas Consumers Council referred the matter to trading standards officials.

GCC director Ian Powe said that one other company was also being investigated over its telephone sales campaign. But Sweb Gas's doorstep campaign, which involved asking consumers to sign contracts, was much more serious. GCC was extremely concerned that some of the 40,000 customers contracted to Sweb Gas may have signed agreements without realising the extent of their commitment.

Sweb Gas last night defended its "very successful" sales campaign but admitted that it would change its documentation. Some consumers have alleged that they believed they were signing for more information when in fact they were signing binding contracts.

Boots ready to sell loss-making children's chain to Storehouse

Patrick Donovan City Editor

BOOTs, the high street drugs retailer, is poised to announce that it has sold its Children's World store chain to Storehouse, with a deal expected as early as next week.

No price has emerged over the likely value of the deal. But the disposal represents a major step forward for Boots, which considers that the specialist chain no longer fits into its core activities.

Children's World, a 50-strong specialist chain of edge-of-town children's stores, is seen as highly attractive to Storehouse because of its Mothercare subsidiary.

Combining the two operations would give Storehouse increasing strength in the huge mother-and-child clothes and accessories market.

Boots said that it was unable to comment on market rumours. However, the sale will come as a relief to the company, as it has failed to make the division pay over

the last 10 years. The company started it in an attempt to launch a "one-stop shop" for all children-related goods, and spent heavily to provide nursery equipment and play areas. Last year Children's World made losses of £1.9 million on sales of £50m and the outlook has deteriorated since a poor Christmas.

A leading analyst said: "Children's World has somehow never fitted in to the Boots chain, and any disposal will be received very positively by the market as a whole."

"This deal has been widely expected but has been a long time coming."

Boots, meanwhile, is still understood to be looking at an acquisition in Germany, although no deal is thought to be imminent.

Other problems remain its under-performing DIY ventures, which include Fairs and Do It All, although no disposals are believed to be pending.

Storehouse is likely to rebrand Children's World under the Mothercare banner after the deal is completed.

News in brief

Burmah sheds petrol chains

The Burmah Castrol lubricants group yesterday raised £64 million from the sale of its petrol retailing businesses in Turkey and Chile, and is in talks to sell its chain of petrol stations in Sweden. The group is pursuing its plan to focus on its core businesses, Castrol and chemicals.

Fashion failure

High street fashion chain Mark One last night went into administration after running up debts of £17 million. The 56-strong chain, which has 2,200 staff, will continue trading and shops will be open as usual today.

BIM drops lawsuit

Robert Maxwell's pension fund company, Bishopsgate Investment Management (BIM), yesterday dropped a High Court claim for more

than £40 million against Swiss bank Credit Suisse. The case related to a £50 million loan made to the company in September 1990. BIM's liquidators had alleged Credit Suisse knew or should have known the shares used as security for the loan belonged to Maxwell pension funds.

BP opens pipeline

British Petroleum and its partners yesterday cleared a key obstacle in the way of an \$8 billion oil project in the central Asian republic of Azerbaijan by signing an agreement with Transneft, Russia's state-owned pipeline company.

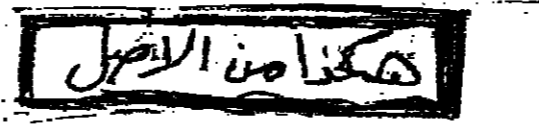
Insurer fined £110,000

The assurance regulator Lauto has fined Combined Life Assurance Company £110,000 plus £20,000 costs for rule breaches committed over a two-and-a-half year period, including a failure to ensure staff acted in accordance with City rules.

TOURIST RATES - BANK BELLS

Australia 1.975	France 7.51	Singapore 2.13
Austria 15.25	Germany 2.20	South Africa 1.92
Belgium 45.00	Greece 370.00	Spain 184.00
Canada 2.025	Hong Kong 11.70	New Zealand 2.23
Denmark 6.50	India 56.13	Norway 9.53
Finland 6.98	Ireland 0.9550	Portugal 228.50
	Israel 4.78	Turkey 0.537
	Saudi Arabia 5.73	USA 1.5025

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel).





Car dealers may buy cheap and resell within EU, court rules

UNSOLD cars lined up... Competition is expected to intensify following a European Court ruling upholding independent dealers' right to buy cars in the cheapest European markets for resale elsewhere in the EU, writes Julie Wolf.

The court rejected a bid by franchised dealerships to prevent such sales on the grounds that they undermine exclusive dealership networks, which are allowed under a special exemption from European competition laws. The judg-

ment argued that the EU's single market allows independent dealers to shop around for the best bargain. The ruling is likely to encourage independent dealers in strong currency nations such as France to purchase cars in EU mem-

ber states with weak currencies, especially Italy. The judgment could fuel calls by French industry for financial help to counter competition from companies that benefit from currency devaluations. PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER SAMBER

As Germany exports jobs, flexibility's all in the mind

COMMENTARY/The stiff challenge of global competition has led to more rhetoric than realism from the Bonn government, says Ian Traynor

LAST week's bad news in Germany was the unemployment numbers soaring through the four-million threshold—and that's the official figure. Then there was the huge hole being punched in the national pensions kitty by early retirement.

This week's bad news began with a respected think-tank, the German Economics Institute (DIW), saying that the economy is not only stagnating, or experiencing what the government likes to call "a pause in growth", but is actually moving into recession. The institute predicts 1 per cent shrinkage in 1996's first quarter compared with the last quarter of 1995 and a 0.5 per cent fall against a year ago.

is "either fooling himself or fooling everyone else". The challenge and the menace, as cited by every governing politician from Chancellor Kohl downwards, is globalisation. "Millions of people who are prepared to compete with us for a third or a tenth of our wages are virtually sitting alongside us at the wage bargaining table. We've become world champions in exporting jobs," the foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, proclaimed in a recent speech. "Globalisation means unprecedented worldwide competition for products, labour costs, and locations."

Increased US competition and Dutch debt crisis challenge Europe's aircraft industry

France goes on the offensive in battle for defence contracts

Simon Bennis and Mark Miller

FRANCE'S powerful defence industry is facing a shake-out as radical as that suffered by its British counterpart during the late eighties and early nineties. Government support has meant that the French defence establishment has been able to ride out both the recession and the restructuring elsewhere that followed the end of the cold war.

Unlike Britain, the French government appears keen to have an influential role in the restructuring. It has already asked industry leaders for their proposals and is expected to determine details of its own policies by the middle of the year.

could almost go to Lockheed Martin and outfit your whole country," according to one US defence analyst. Nor has the US group made any secret of its desire to make acquisitions in Europe. Earlier this month, Alain Gomez, the chief executive of Thomson, one of France's leading defence suppliers, warned the French senate that Europe's best defence against the US challenge lay in the creation of large defence groupings.

In the French press that Thomson has met British Aerospace, Daimler-Benz Aerospace (Dasa), Aerospatiale and GEC-Marconi to discuss the challenge presented by the US companies. Within the British defence establishment there is support for the idea of building up European groupings, although the political importance of many of the companies involved and the extent of state ownership have made joint ventures and co-operation on particular projects the preferred European route.

BAA, on the grounds that the creation of a "national champion" would undermine competition. This week a MoD spokesman said that mergers were a matter for the industry but value for money and competition remained the linchpins of procurement policy.

Fokker unions expect bid to land soon

Mark Miller

DUTCH aircraft manufacturer Fokker's fight for survival is set to enter a decisive phase over the next few days. Union sources have indicated that a bid could be on the way shortly, with the Canadian company Bombardier tipped as the most likely candidate.

might make a move have been fuelled by reports that executives from the Canadian company are due to visit Fokker over the weekend. Fokker's future was thrown into jeopardy when its controlling shareholder, Daimler-Benz Aerospace (Dasa), announced last month that it was not prepared to provide

further funds to the ailing aircraft manufacturer after failing to agree the terms of a rescue package with the Dutch government, which also has a stake in Fokker. The Dutch aircraft manufacturer then won court protection from its creditors and is being kept in operation by a mixture of loans and advance

payments from the Dutch government, though the 365 million guilders (£146 million) of funding will run out around the end of the month. If the company were to fail, it would be Holland's biggest industrial closure, threatening the loss of more than 5,000 jobs. Dasa has warned it could have to shed 1,000 jobs if Fok-

ker closes, while Belfast-based Short Brothers, which is owned by Bombardier and makes wings for Fokker, has issued notices warning of up to 1,500 possible job losses. According to Fokker, it has received several approaches, including one from the Korean company Samsung, which is thought to be interested in Fokker's technology. British Aerospace and France's Aerospatiale, partners in a marketing joint venture for their regional jet businesses, have said they are monitoring the situation.

British bid for Greek shipyards

Niki Panoagoulas and Mark Miller

TWO UK companies are among the leading contenders for a five-year contract to manage the state-owned Scaramangas shipyards in Greece.

and Ferrostaal. The Scaramangas yards, hit by the cost-cutting and falling revenue, faced bankruptcy last October after the announcement that European competition laws prevented state aid.

was forthcoming. The crisis cost the then industry minister, now prime minister — Costas Simitis — his job. Following Mr Simitis' departure from the ministry there were tough negotiations between Greece and the European Commission about the future of the shipyards and, despite reservations on feasibility, the EC agreed to the rescue package.

40 per cent of the shares of Scaramangas Shipyards would pass to the workforce, while the rest would pass to the National Bank for Industrial Development, a state-owned investment bank. Debts would be written off by the state, and the management of the shipyards be contracted out.

Update

Trade unions at French Renault are calling for a day of action this month ahead of what is expected to be a difficult round of pay talks with the company. They said the protest would "have the strength of a warning".



Stodgy pasta empire set for strict slimming cure

The Italian family firm of Barilla is slashing prices to stem falling sales. JOHN GLOVER asks if it means war

BEING forced to slim is a depressing business for anyone. If you make one third of Italy's pasta, half its ready-made sauces and 40 per cent of its biscuits — as Barilla does — it is the unkindest cut of all.

problems were already looming when Barilla senior died. Since then, the company has been on meagre rations, with falling sales and dwindling profits. The latter dived from 15 billion lire (€47 million) in 1994 to 80 billion lire in 1995. Sales were stagnant at about 3.3 trillion lire.

to buttress P&G's ailing brands. In 1993 came the closure of 30 factories and 13,000 lay-offs. But there are big differences between the United States and Italy now. In the US, the pain of ending trade promotions was felt first by retailers, not consumers. In Italy, 20 per cent of Barilla's customers collect stamps to exchange for promotional gifts. The benefit of the new list prices will go to shopkeepers, who may or may not pass it on to customers.

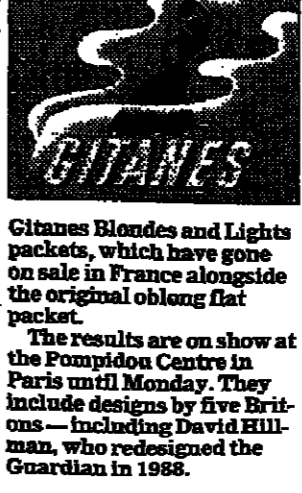
Gitanes get case of blues

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

AMERICANISM — that dreaded phenomenon — has claimed another cultural victim: the quintessentially French cigarette, Gitane.

At P&G one of Mr Artzt's first moves was to end the trade promotions and discounts that were fattening shopkeepers' margins, in favour of year-round lower prices. At the same time, he boosted advertising spending

According to Mr Artzt, that is the point. He said the company's research showed 80 per cent of its customers would prefer a price cut to a present. But if a biscuit-and-pasta price war begins, Barilla's diet may only be beginning.



Hillman was one of only two designers who did not use "Gitane blue" — the background colour against which the silhouette of a dancing gypsy was laid by Max Ponty in 1947. A sign of our anti-smoking times is perhaps that the haze of smoke on the original packet is absent from all the entries, including those by the winner, Shin Matsunaga. Mr Matsunaga, a 55-year-old Japanese designer, said: "To me, the old Max-Ponty design represents France and European civilisation. His design incorporates a kind of scent of France which is inexpressible. To me blue is the colour of France."

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

Finance Guardian

Golden times in a world of chaos and greed

To look at the price of bullion, you might think that a third world war was on the way. DAN ATKINSON examines the speculators

GREEK and Turkish warships square off in the Aegean Sea. China menaces Taiwan and the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz is despatched to the trouble zone. Further south, a discreet but heavy weapons build-up continues apace. Western commentators wake up to the fact that the nations of the Pacific Rim, far from constituting a haven of peace and prosperity, are riven with ancient rivalries and armed to the teeth. In Russia and Poland, the communists are back. Bosnia-Herzegovina threatens to detonate again. And anti-terrorist police return to the streets of London while troop reinforcements are despatched to Northern Ireland.

All in all, a satisfactory new year for anyone holding large amounts of gold.

The conventional view has it that bad news is good news for the gold price, and the better the better. True to form, as 1996 has turned ugly, the price has taken off, surging from \$340 a Troy ounce before Christmas to, at one point, \$414.5. But, although the wars and rumours of wars played their part, more mundane fears — related to inflation and currency stability — loomed larger in the minds of most buyers.

Worldwide monetary policy is relaxing as once-sceptical central bankers appear to be coming round to the "inflation is dead" viewpoint. In London this week, Eddie George shed his ice-man image and beamed avuncularly on the

prospect of further base-rate cuts.

Merrill Lynch, with admirable bluntness, advised clients on February 7: "Central banks are relaxing. Buy gold."

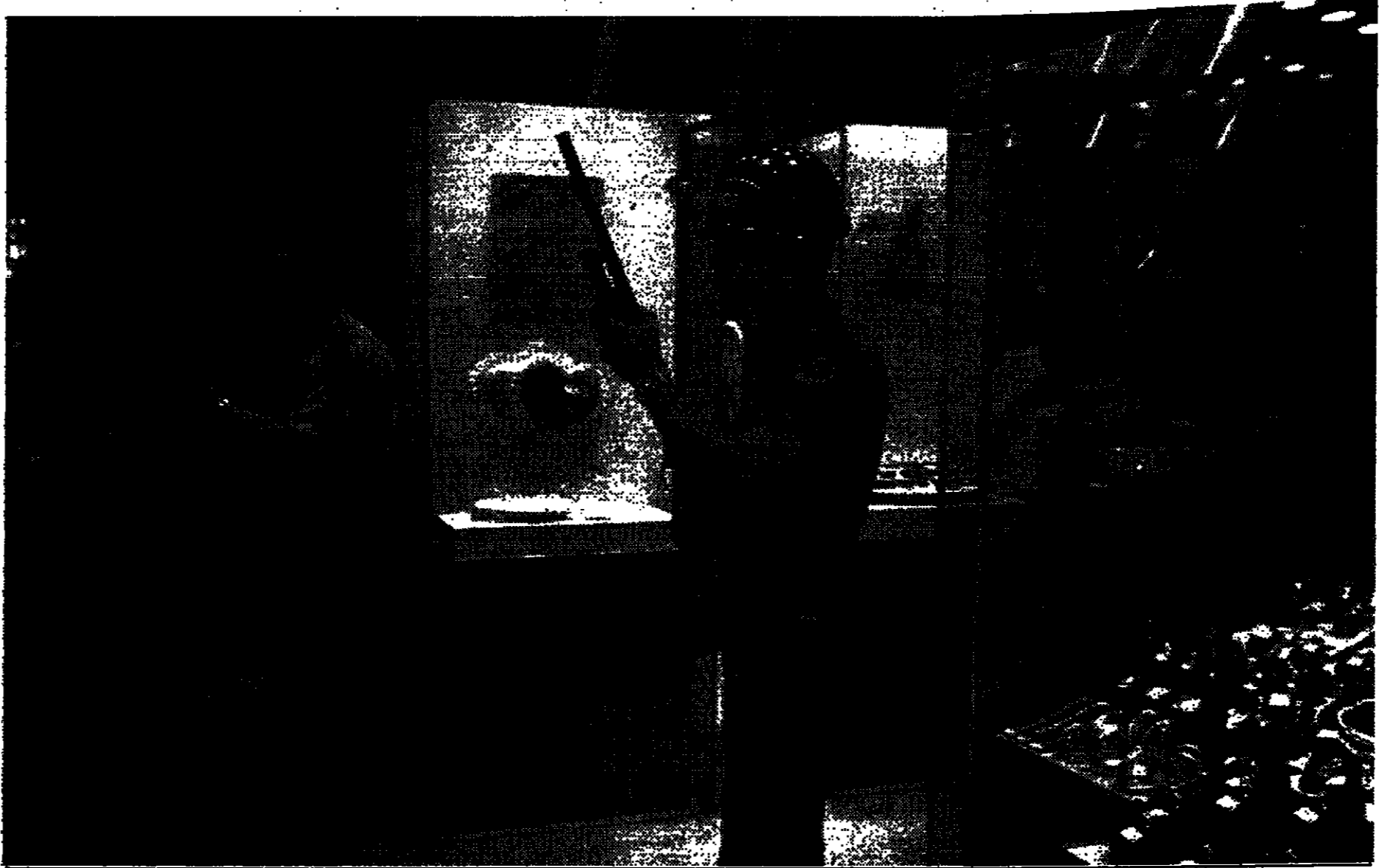
This message has particular resonance in Germany, the World Gold Council noted this week. Investors, fearful that the mighty mark could be submerged into a Toyota single currency, have been putting their money where their Euro-sceptical mouths are. That means either into gold itself — and billion-ounce sales rocketed 104 per cent to 31 metric tons in 1995 — or into the next best thing, the gold-backed Swiss franc.

Ironically, the possibility of currency union covering at least part of the EU may also be helping the gold price upwards. A European Central Bank will be a little reserved in its choice of reserve assets — as both the dollar and the yen represent the liabilities of Europe's chief trading partners — and gold may be awarded a prominent role.

If war and inflation provide two stimuli for gold's upward march, technical factors furnish a third.

Gold "offtake" — demand for investment, manufacturing and industrial purposes — set new records in 1992 and 1993. But you wouldn't think so from the price, which, while above mid-80s lows, has dawdled for most of this decade in the middle \$300-\$400 an ounce range.

Clearly, this could not continue indefinitely and in January this year Gold Fields Mineral Services identified a 700-



Secure investment... Gold stocks in the hedonistic state of Hong Kong protected by armed security guards

Sky-high prices fail to provide glister for the jewel of British mines

Dan Atkinson

FOR Britain's gold-mining industry, the prospect of spectacular rises in the gold price is a mixed blessing. Welsh Gold, owner of the country's one fully functioning commercial gold mine in Gwynedd, north Wales, prefers a strong, steady open market price to a speculator-driven boom.

Managing director Ronald Phelps said "a market in which there was intense speculation... would not be in the best interests of most end-users".

He explained that a real upward price shock could hit sales of gold jewellery, which is the mainstay of the Gwynedd mine.

Welsh gold sells at roughly three times the open market bullion price,

as a steady flow of gold is good news. But a rapid rise, followed by the inevitable crash, is not helpful either to Mr Phelps and his team, or to the owners of the fledgling Cornish mine 60 miles north-west of Glasgow or for those hoping to begin gold mining in Otago, Northern Ireland.

Backers for these projects would prefer stability to the striped-shirt volatility

associated with rapid ups and downs on bullion markets. They would not wish prospective investors to be reminded that gold, because it produces no income stream of itself, is an unusually volatile investment. But a little bullishness on the gold market could help — if it lifts Welsh Gold's share price, floated last year at 60p and now languishing at around 40p.

As the gold price rises, purchases fall and smart investors sell gold into the rally. There is the much greater sophistication of the market's big players, who, using hedging techniques, help smooth out price movements.

And there is that "corpse from the grave", inflation. Suppose it really is dead, and its supposed resurrection is merely a phantom? Then anyone sitting on a gold board is going to look pretty foolish.

These and other factors make a strong case for caution, even among those confident of gold's continuing monetary role in the 21st century.

Thus Roger Murphy, of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, keeps his enthusiasm for gold as an investment medium strictly apart from his sober \$412.4-\$415 an ounce forecast for the 1996 average price, with a possible short-lived "spike" up to \$450.

T Hoare & Co is even more cautious. Analyst Evonora

Some sort of price take-off was a racing certainty.

Very broadly speaking, in the developed world — which accounts for about 40 per cent of gold demand — jewellery-related sales do well when times are good and investment-related demand is buoyant when times are bad.

But in the great gold markets of the developing world — in particular the Middle East, India, China and the Far East — there is neither the same distinction between jewellery and investment, nor between good times and bad.

Gold in all forms is bought as it can be afforded, whatever the weather, as the backbone of an individual's portfolio of wealth.

As the Pacific Rim has boomed, so have sales. In 1995, demand in south-east Asia and Korea hit record levels.

So, for anyone hoping that the bullion price will rise, the best possible combination of

circumstances would include inflation fears in the west, greater spending on jewellery, very strong growth in the east, a wobbly US monetary policy (a presidential election would help as well) and a general rise in the level of arbitrage (wars, invasions, sabre-rattling) around the world.

BY HAPPY chance — if that is a suitable term — most of these factors have clicked into place in the first few weeks of this year.

And in the finest traditions of the bullion market, the instability without is mirrored by chronic rumour-mongering of instability within.

A Brazilian Nick Leeson is said to have struck the country's central bank with a cast-iron 2,000-tonne short position, threatening multi-million dollar losses. In London, there is talk of a bullion bank going under after the cost of borrowing gold

soars. In New York, gold men mutter that official dealing figures do not add up — and we're back to that Brazil rumour. In Brasilia, the Banco Central retorts by alleging that its name has been misused by a New York bullion trader. The gold price is on the move and everybody's talking.

Yet the mood in the market is cautious, bordering on the downright conservative. And for good reason.

Between 1987 and the end of 1994, the price, denominated in US dollars and adjusted for inflation, crumpled by about 35 per cent. During that downswing there were upward movements, notably during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis. False dawn, every one.

Today, excellent reasons abound in professional circles to explain why talk of \$500 or more an ounce is unrealistic. These is the price sensitivity of consumers in the all-important eastern blocs, with special regard for the entry

ports of Dubai and Hong Kong. As the gold price rises, purchases fall and smart investors sell gold into the rally.

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O'Connell expects the market to fall between \$365 and \$410 during this year, with a \$450 average price.

None of this is too cheering for the amateur gold speculator in all of us. We had watched the bubble in Eastern European gold prices, who for scrap edging towards \$20 a gram and had hoped to ditch those rather nasty chunky old flasks at a handsome profit.

But as a rule you can't have really spectacular price rises while enjoying relative peace and economic stability. The table charting the ups and downs of gold (in 1994 dollars) reads like a temperature chart for western society. There is the steadiness at below \$200 during the late 60s and early 70s, then the surge towards \$500 dollars in 1974-75 as the "eight decade" got into its stride.

TRACKING the bombings, hijackings, violent industrial unrest, rampant inflation, wars, coups d'état and rising unemployment, gold has risen up to its post-war assessment of glory in January 1996, hitting around \$1,100 an ounce just as Russian tanks rolled into Afghanistan. President Carter prepared to launch the ill-fated Iranian hostage rescue and the European crisis unfolded.

After that, it was downhill all the way. The cold war thawed, inflation was tamed, democracy gradually returned even to such hearts of darkness as South America and parts of Africa. Boom

increased to slump in the 1990s and disinflation threatened to turn into deflation.

None of this is so cheering for gold. Who needed a hedge against inflation when it-since ministers around the world could each offer in predictions of monetary madness? Who needed irregularities or kinks here to acquire away their undelivered income when even former communists were hanging on about the need for "incentives" and for "competitive" mechanisms?

None of this is so cheering for gold. In 1995, a record 1,268 tonnes were sold around the world, according to the World Gold Council, a 10 per cent rise on 1994. Even though demand in the last quarter was softening — and the council expects 1996 to be a year of consolidation — underlying sales are firm.

But real upward movement, if it happens, will reflect the extent, or lack of it, of instability in currencies, economies and international relations. It will reflect the extent to which the slump really is over.

Unconventional as it may seem, the best indicators in this regard are the markets for property and labour. Should negative equity fade into nothing more than a pain-ful memory, and should unemployment fail to the point where still shortages become a general problem for the industry, then the odds against a real surge in the gold price become ever shorter.

When all this will happen is anybody's guess.

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Breaking the chain

Dan Atkinson

IT IS a memory from the day before yesterday, from any childhood of the 50s or 60s. The post is being opened and suddenly mother's face darkens. She angrily tears the offending communication into strips, takes care to destroy the envelope and deposits the lot in a wastepaper basket.

Another chain letter bites the dust.

It is hard to recall the passions aroused by the old-style chain letters, with their amateurish Brito scribbles and their dire warnings of death and disaster for those "breaking the chain". They were, every middle-class parent would declare, illegal. Worse, they were immoral, paying on frightened or gullible people.

And finally, they didn't even work properly. Elementary mathematics taught that a scheme that

relied on an ever-expanding number of new recruits to 10 challenges for whatever the bet would, sooner rather than later, run out of population.

How quiet these schemes seem now, 15 years into the new go-for-it market economy. Right? Well, only if they contain threats, and who needs to threaten when it is so quick and easy to make wild promises of future riches? Immoral? Guilt-free all round. How paralytic, how GM?

As for not working properly, we live in a random world, far from equilibrium global market. You may just as well say the foreign exchange market doesn't "work properly". Who cares? If you're "ahead of the curve" you'll clean up. Knot, too bad.

Sure enough, the chain letter, and its equally ugly sister the pyramid selling scheme, are flourishing. By late 1994 it was estimated that get-rich-quick racketeers may have taken \$200 million from the public. There was Emergency Programme, Money World, Alchemy UK and Global Planners. There was Midea. There was, of course, Inner Revolution.

How what is wrong with it is not that the chain-letter principle declines as never before, but that the authorities are so inept that they suggest it. The Department of Trade and Industry has even set up a day to denigrate pyramid promoters before the courts and to shut them down.

Why? Chain letters represent the ultimate destination of the "service economy" and are little more than a government-level version of the great pyramid scheme in the City of London.

One variant advertises for people to pay a one-off sum to join a money-spinning scheme. Subscribers receive a booklet telling them what to do, which is... in other words, the other people pay a one-off sum to join a money-spinning scheme.

There is no product. There is not even any service. There is only money. What does a "virtual" economy and the "financial services industry" could ask for more?

But, just as Stalin might have reached for his shoelaces and the great pyramids, so our Government grabs a High Court judge whenever it finds evidence of this refined form of free-market looting. And in doing so, it gives the Brito owners claim that "you can't break the mirror".

Or, in this case, break the chain.

Quick Crossword No. 8051

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Across

- 1 French count (7)
- 8 Join (7)
- 9 Shorter — less frequent (7)
- 10 Brutal (7)
- 11 The same (5)
- 12 Secluded garden area (3)
- 13 South polar regions (3)
- 14 Re-organised (5)
- 15 Rope-winding machine (7)
- 22 Hand over — free (7)
- 23 Hard over — free (7)
- 24 Utmost (7)

Down

- 1 Pondered (5)
- 2 Respond (5)
- 3 Not helped (13)
- 4 Writer (5)
- 5 Away in (2,3,4,4)
- 6 Sailor (5)
- 7 Posture (5)
- 22 Press clothes (4)
- 24 Ship's company (4)
- 14 Give one's consent (5)
- 16 Fall over — cushion (5)
- 17 Time of locking (5)
- 18 Yellow-green colour (5)
- 20 Sailor's or trader's daughter (5)

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Big Rain Little Rain

Sheep

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